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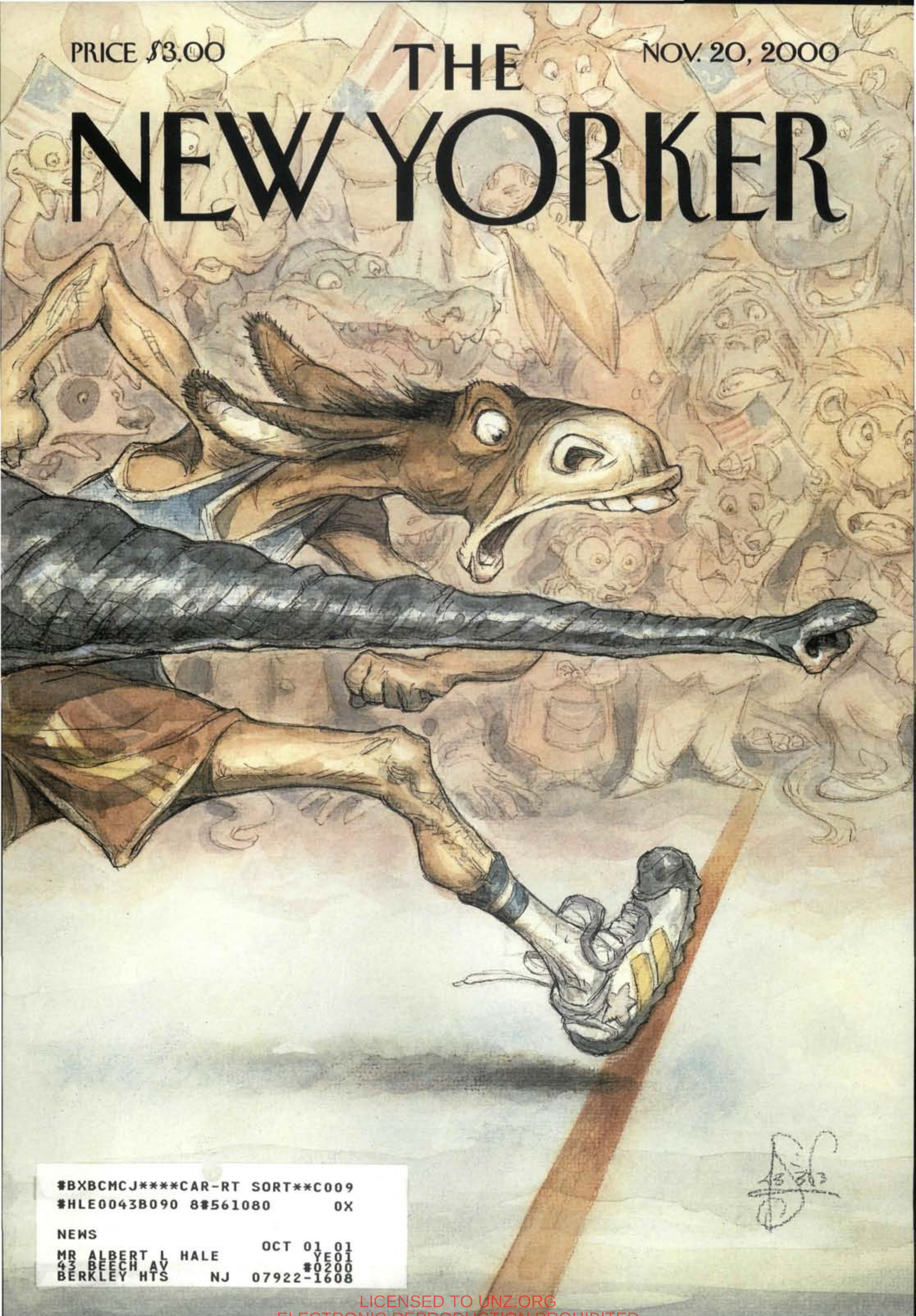

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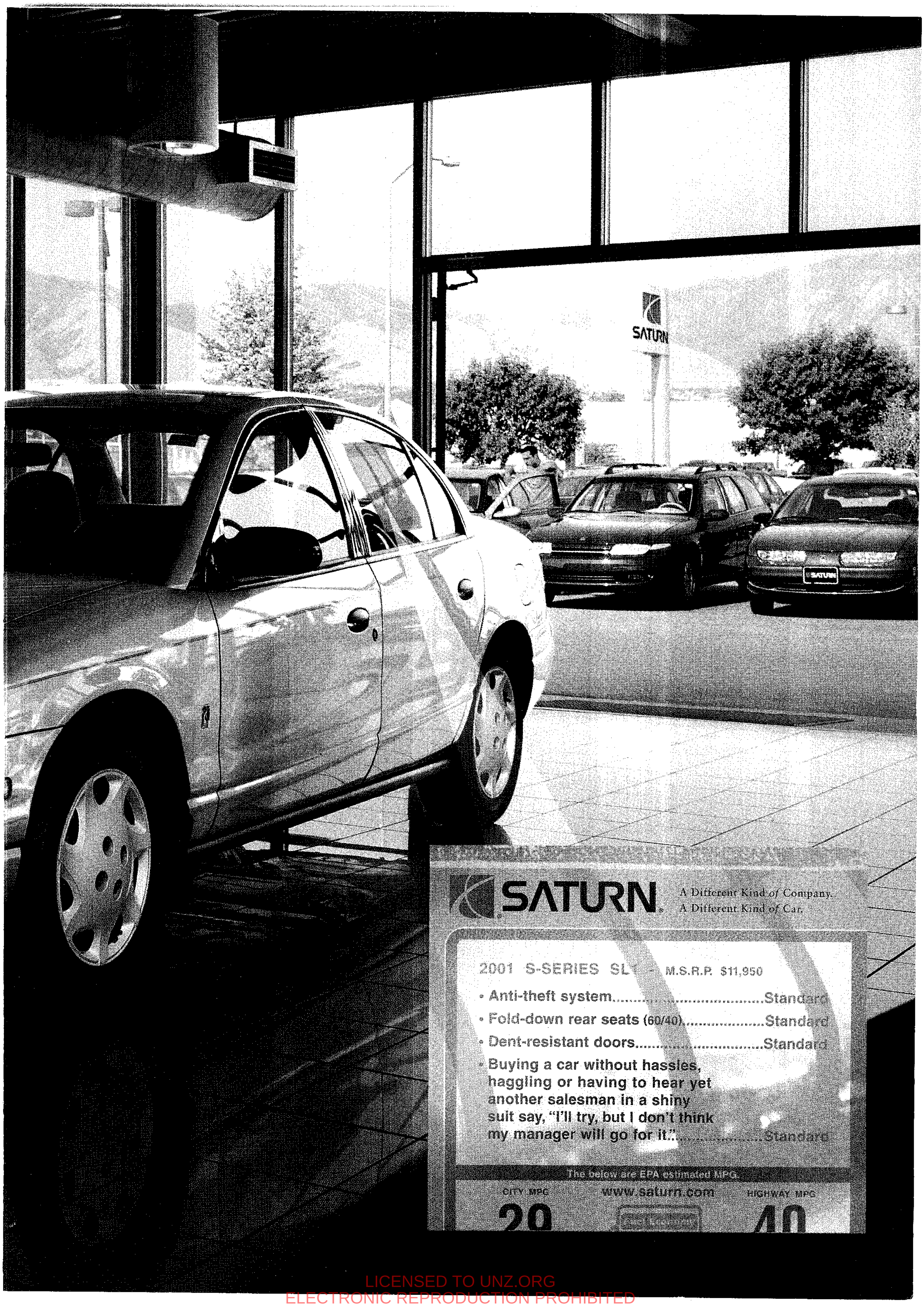

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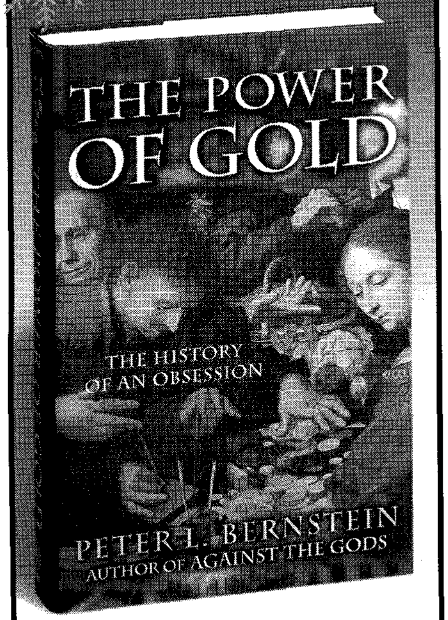

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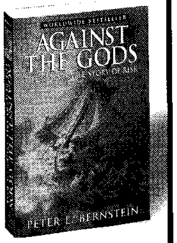

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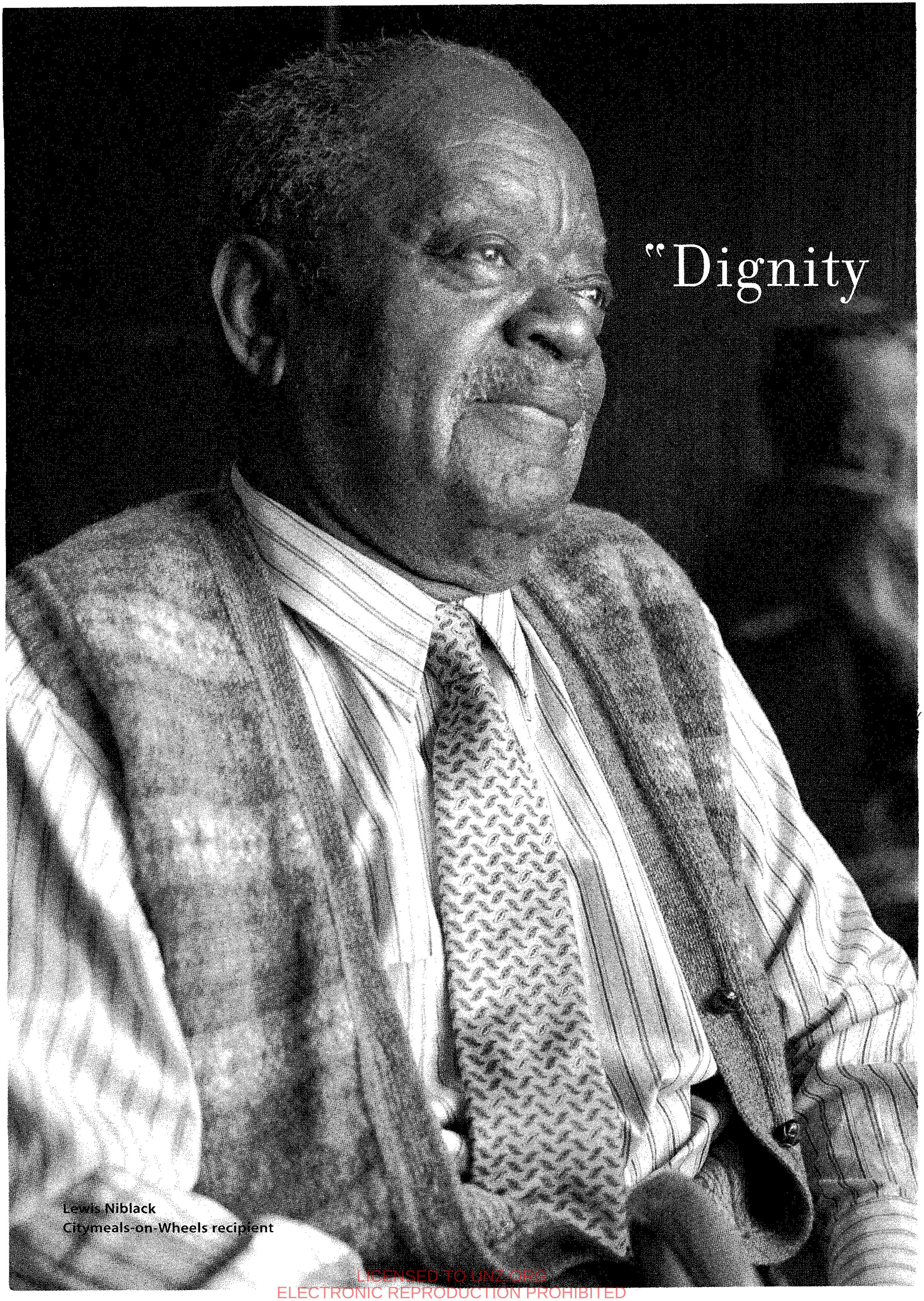

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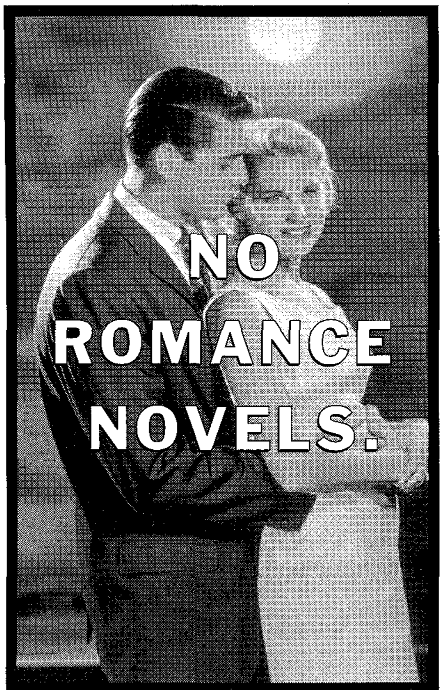

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CONTRIBUTORS

Mary Anne Weaver ("Democracy by Decree," p. 54) is a foreign correspondent for the magazine and the author of "A Portrait of Egypt."

Richard Brody ("An Exile in Paradise," p. 62) is an independent filmmaker.

Hendrik Hertzberg (The Talk of the Town, p. 40; Books, p. 92), a senior editor, was formerly a speechwriter for President Jimmy Carter.

Joe Klein (Comment, p. 35), the magazine's Washington correspondent, is the author of "Primary Colors" and "The Running Mate."

J. J. Sempé (Sketchbook, p. 77) will show a collection of his unpublished animal drawings at the Galerie Martine Gossieaux, in Paris, in December.

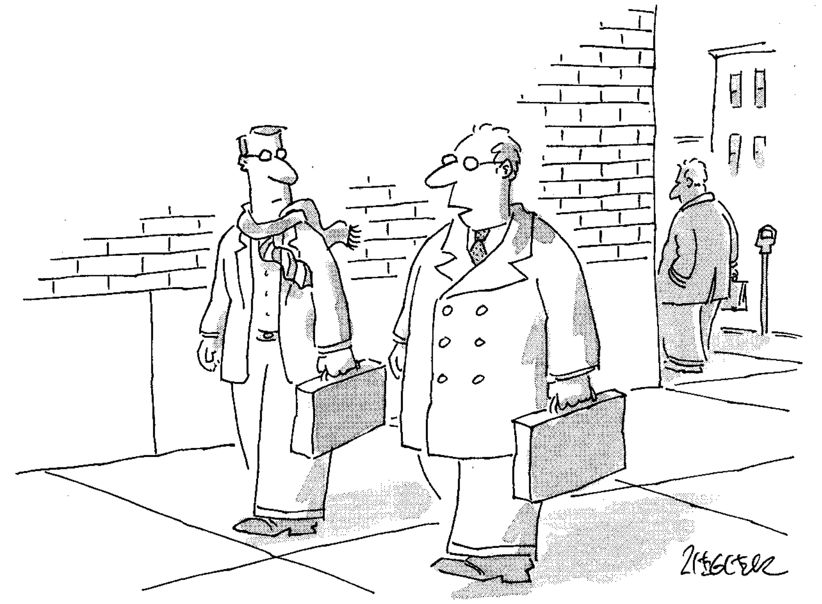
Ann Beattie (Fiction, p. 80) won this year's PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Fiction. Her first story for the magazine, "A Platonic Relationship," appeared in 1974. Her new book, "Perfect Recall," a collection of short stories, will be published in January.

Elizabeth Kolbert (The Talk of the Town, p. 40) covers New York politics for the magazine.

Peter Schjeldahl (The Art World, p. 104) is an art critic for the magazine.

Jane Mayer (The Talk of the Town, p. 36) is a staff writer based in Washington and the co-author of "Strange Justice."

Jim Windolf (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 50) is a writer and editor. This is his first contribution to the magazine. ♦



"When I heard that 'Charlie's Angels' raked in more than forty million in its first weekend, I sensed that there was great confusion in this country."

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THE MAIL

WOMEN ON THE BENCH

Female judges in Harris County, Texas, have received some of the highest and some of the lowest ratings in recent judicial polls, and yet Jeffrey Toobin insists on looking at these judges through the lens of gender ("Women in Black," October 30th). This isn't new. The justifications that were used to keep women from even sitting on juries in criminal cases in Texas until 1955 were also based on theories about the female character: it was not appropriate for women to hear the "unsavory" facts that might come up in a criminal trial, or to be sequestered, away from their families. Now Toobin plays up Judge Susan Brown's supposed lack of compassion in some death-penalty cases, even as a local newspaper has recently criticized her for showing a murderer too much leniency. Her decisions run the gamut, but no matter how she rules they are subjected to criticism. Even when Southern women get off the pedestal, it seems, they are still expected to know their place.

Ellen Elkins Grimes
Chair, State Bar of Texas Women in the Profession Committee
Houston, Tex.

It's not all that surprising that female judges in Texas would, as Toobin writes, enforce the death penalty with greater energy than their male counterparts. It is, after all, only in the past century that a revolution in gender roles has allowed a good number of women to assume positions of power. As with any revolution, the new players tend to be, if not extremists, at least overzealous in carrying out their work. In contrast, the theory that there might be a distinctively female style of judging—whether based on empathy or on mercy—is much harder to prove.

Bang Nguyen
Houston, Tex.

The question that a study of Texas's tough-minded female judges is best suited to answer is not whether women are more compassionate than men but whether ideology trumps gender. As Toobin notes, most of the judges in question are Republican; the prosecution-friendly "ferocity" of these women in enforcing criminal law has little to do with their sex, and everything to do with the behavior of Texas Republicans in general. One hopes that, if nothing else, the Presidential election will have drawn attention to the troubled judicial culture ascendant in the Lone Star State, with its studied disregard for due process.

Nancy Shepherdson
Barrington, Ill.

LOST IN THE CLASSROOM

Mark Singer suggests that the series of "calamities and embarrassments" that have plagued Decatur, Illinois, may lead to the deterioration of the city's schools ("Town on a String," October 30th). When I graduated from high school in Decatur in 1970, public education there was little more than highly structured babysitting. No teacher ever asked me to read a book other than a textbook, or to write a research paper. If you attended class and were not too disruptive, your grades were fine. When I got to college, I realized that classmates who had attended other schools in the region were much better prepared, and I had to catch up to compete. Singer notes that Decatur has not passed an education-fund levy since the nineteen-fifties (and failed to do so again last week), so it's safe to assume that its public schools haven't improved much since my day. Accordingly, I suspect that the school system is better characterized as a culprit behind Decatur's many troubles than as a victim.

Jackson Schmidt
Seattle, Wash.

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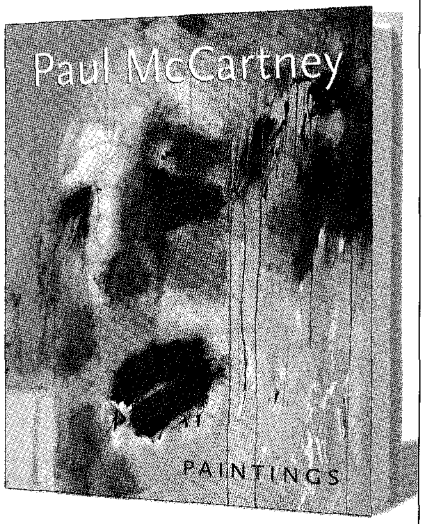

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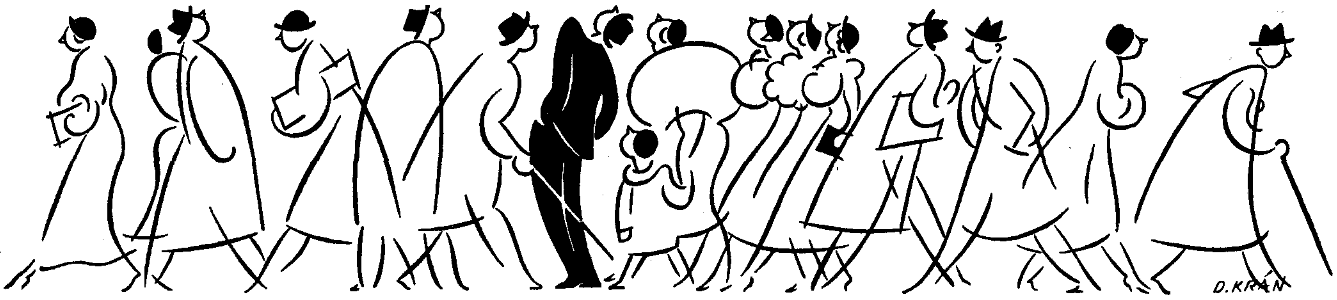

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BOOK OF THE DEAD: SECOND AVENUE
The latest multimedia work by John Moran, an exploration of spirituality in the digital age, set both on Second Avenue in New York City and in ancient Egypt. In previews through Nov. 18. Opens Nov. 19 at 7. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

COMIC POTENTIAL
Alan Ayckbourn's black comedy imagines a future in which robotlike beings work alongside actors in the film industry. Preview on Nov. 15. Opens Nov. 16 at 6:45. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

DOWN THE GARDEN PATHS
Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson lead the cast in a new four-couple comedy by Anne Meara. In previews through Nov. 18. Opens Nov. 19 at 7. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

JANE EYRE
The musical. Marla Schaffel is Jane; James Barbour is Rochester. With a book by John Caird and a score by Paul Gordon. Directed by Mr. Caird and Scott Schwartz. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

KIT MARLOWE
David Grimm's drama examines the tempestuous life of the Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe. In previews through Nov. 18. Opens Nov. 19 at 7. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

OLD MONEY
A new play by Wendy Wasserstein, under the direction of Mark Brokaw. John Cullum, Mary Beth Hurt, and Dan Butler are in the cast. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

SAVED OR DESTROYED
Rattlestick starts the season with a Harry Kondoleon festival, beginning with this previously unproduced comedy. In previews through Nov. 19. Opens Nov. 20 at 7. (Rattlestick Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl. 206-1515.)

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE
Lily Tomlin returns to Broadway in Jane Wagner's 1985 multicharacter solo show. Preview on Nov. 15. Opens Nov. 16 at 7. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SEUSSICAL
A new musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty which blends stories and characters from the books of Dr. Seuss. Frank Galati is the director. In previews. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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19	20	21				

TINY ALICE
Laila Robins and Richard Thomas star in a Second Stage revival of Edward Albee's 1965 drama. Previews begin Nov. 16. (307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ALICE IN BED
Susan Sontag's 1993 fantasy play, which was inspired by the journals of Henry and William James's sister, Alice. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

AWAKENING
Kate Chopin's 1899 novel, "The Awakening," is the basis for Chiori Miyagawa's new drama, which incorporates music, by Mark Campbell and Daniel Sonnenberg, and dance. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

BAAL
Bertolt Brecht's first play, produced by Jim Simpson and his lively Bat Theatre Company. The script suffers from many first-play problems (it's too long and occasionally clunky), but it clearly presents several of Brecht's preoccupations—how purely disgusting humans are, and whether that disgustingness can be transcended or defied. Michael J. X. Gladis, as Baal, is provocative from the first word he speaks. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407.)

BETRAYAL
Juliette Binoche, Liev Schreiber, and John Slattery are the love triangle in Harold Pinter's 1980 psychological drama. David Leveaux is the director. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-9393.)

CHEKHOV NOW
The festival of works inspired by the Russian playwright continues through Nov. 19. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. For more information, call 414-7773.)

A CLASS ACT
The late Ed Kleban's life following his success as the lyricist of "A Chorus Line" is the basis of this musical. With music and lyrics by Mr. Kleban and a book by Linda Kline and Lonny Price. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

COBB
An encore production of Lee Blessing's play about the baseball legend Ty Cobb, which was originally staged by the Melting Pot Theatre last spring. (Lucille Lortel Theatre, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The New Federal Theatre presents a political thriller by Jay Broad, in which a U.S. President attempts to oust a black Supreme Court Justice. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 279-4200. Closes Nov. 23.)

CRAVE
Deborah Harry stars in the late British playwright Sarah Kane's examination of the dark side of human relationships. (Axis, 1 Sheridan Sq. 807-9300.)

THE DINNER PARTY
Neil Simon's new comedy is set in an opulent restaurant in Paris, and his six characters—three divorced couples—are not the usual transplanted, fish-out-of-water Simon-Americans of his "Suite" plays. They are actually French, or are meant to be. Despite having the trappings of a departure, the play is essentially traditional fare; the running, or limping, gags are in ready supply, and the secondhand shtick, often in the form of aeons-old alimony jokes, flows freely along this Boulevard of Broken Marriages. The generally swell cast—Len Cariou, John Ritter, Veanne Cox, Penny Fuller, Henry Winkler, and Jan Maxwell—is under the direction of John Rando. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/6/00.) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

END OF THE WORLD PARTY
A comedy by Chuck Ranberg, about a group of men who rent a Fire Island house together each year. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

FAME TAKES A HOLIDAY
A comedy by Warren Leight ("Side Man"), about the backstage infighting of an all-woman comedy troupe. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
The latest edition of Gerard Alessandrini's ongoing musical satire of the players and the plays along the Great White Way. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

FOUR GUYS NAMED JOSÉ . . . AND UNA MUJER NAMED MARIA
This crowd-pleasing, crayon-colored revue of Latin song and dance is knowingly broad and hammy. But the talented cast sends up the singers and songs that helped create Latin stereotypes and delivers the remaining material—dance songs, songs of nostalgia for one's homeland, songs of love, songs about women named Maria—with exuberant wit and affection. (Blue Angel, 323 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE FULL MONTY
The musical version of the 1997 movie, about a group of unemployed factory workers who try to

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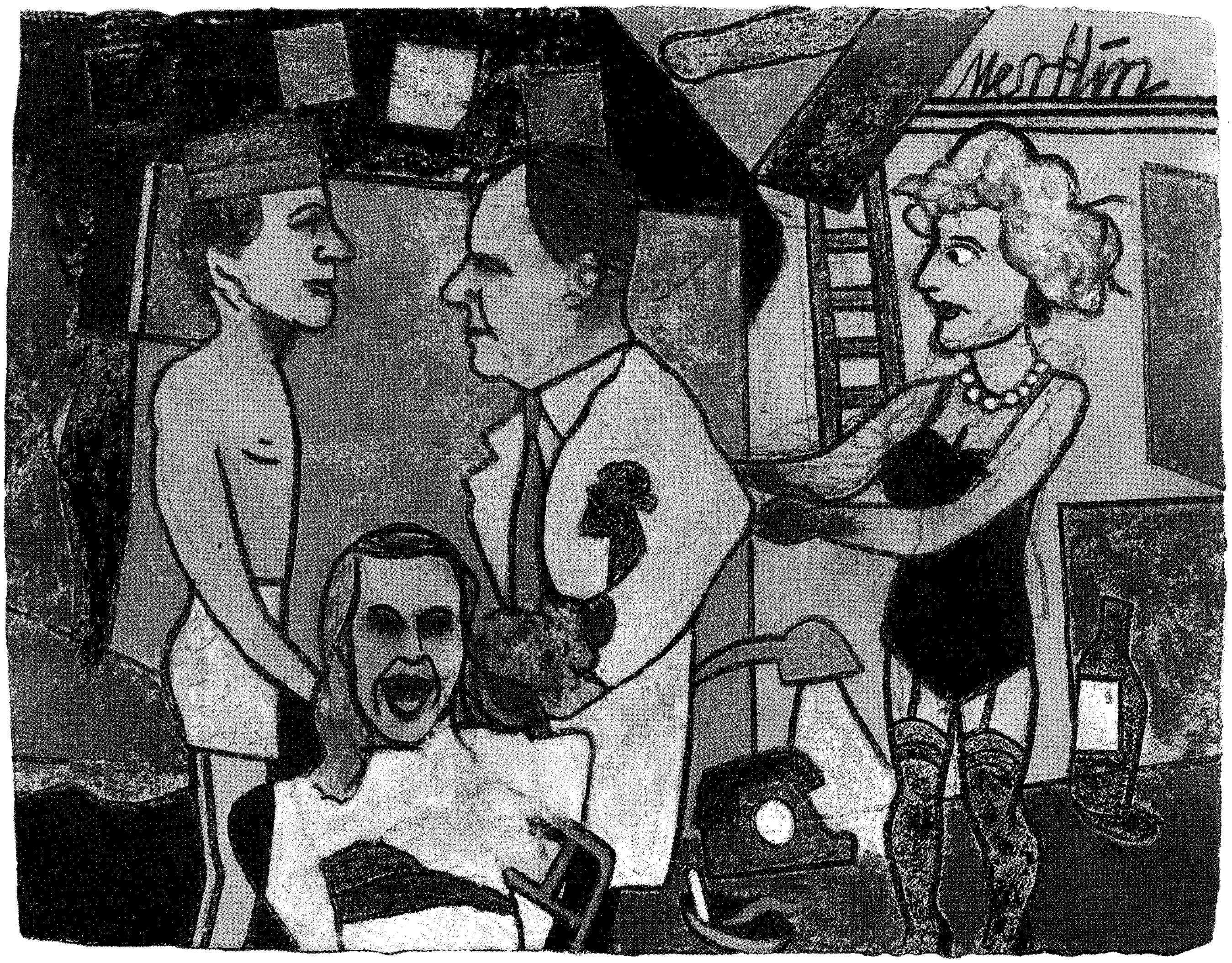

Joe Orton's black comedy "What the Butler Saw," in a staging by the New Group, at the Theatre of St. Clement's.

RICHARD MERKIN

earn some cash by stripping, is faithful to the original story—even though the locale has been shifted from the North of England to Buffalo. It has all the spirit and charm of the original but, as befits a Broadway production, on a much larger, pizzazzier scale. Instead of being touched, you're likely to be moved up out of your seat by the display of musical and choreographic bravura onstage. Early on, Terrence McNally's book and David Yazbek's songs strike the notes of class consciousness and unemployment-related low male self-esteem a little too hard—you may think you're in for a musical version of Susan Faludi's "Stiffed"—but soon enough the show's winning good humor and inventiveness kick in, and if you don't find yourself laughing consistently (and tearing up occasionally), well, then, maybe you don't *deserve* to see six men dancing around in red G-strings. The terrific cast, which includes Patrick Wilson, John Ellison Conlee, André De Shields, and Emily Skinner, and Kathleen Freeman as an old show-biz bawd, is under the fine direction of Jack O'Brien, and the delightful dancing is courtesy of Jerry Mitchell. A word to wise parents: the show's ribaldry is harmless and funny, but it's not for the Pokémon set. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

GAME SHOW

The action of Bob Walton and Jeffrey Finn's "play" clumsily shifts from a trivia contest between audience volunteers to scripted, behind-the-scenes backstabbing between the producer (Cheryl Stern) and the host (Michael McGrath) of the show within the show. The drama that unfolds during the "commercial breaks" is embarrassingly flat, but the participatory sequences are surprisingly amusing, if only because they involve laughing at the contestants (at a recent show, a professional woman defined a "gynephobe" as a person who is afraid of giants). (45 Bleecker, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

GORE VIDAL'S THE BEST MAN

Gore Vidal's sophisticated, elegant, and damned entertaining 1960 play about the politics of politics, whose mots are as eerily accurate for Shrub and Al as they were, originally, for Adlai and Tricky Dick. Rather than a satire, the play is a comedy of manners (or, rather, of bad political manners) which shares with the eighteenth century an obsession with façade—its invention, manipulation, and exposure. Directed by Ethan McSweeny. (10/2/00) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE GOREY DETAILS

A musical inspired by the works of the author-illustrator Edward Gorey. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

HIGHWAY TO TOMORROW

Elevator Repair Service retells "The Bacchae"—set in St. Louis, of all places—with songs, choreography, and found objects that include an Igloo cooler, a Koosh ball, and a stainless-steel thermos with glued-on eyes. That this hilarious show doesn't always make sense seems to be the point; the troupe's interpretation of Euripides' tragedy conveys the absurdity of Greek myth. The minimal staging sets off the production's best visuals—the costumes, which include blue vinyl pants, a wraparound parka, and a black ensemble trimmed with packets of Chinese-food condiments. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 647-0202.)

THE HOSTAGE

Brendan Behan's 1960 play is set in that year, a moment of relative peace in Ireland, and it raises the question of whether anyone other than a few fanatics really cared anymore about the country's entanglement with England. Set in a boarding house-cum-brothel run by a hero of the 1916 uprising, the show is an odd but stirring mix of song, dance, gibes, and storytelling; a plot slowly sneaks in, though, and turns it into an examination of how much the Irish of the time did mind English rule and of whether they could stand to use terrorism as a weapon. Forty years on, Behan's political views are still fresh, and the play itself is a fascinating mixture of tragedy and vitality and fun, like a good pub tale. The talented cast is directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK

Even a spirited performance by Jim Nelson, as the feckless, braggart "paycock" of the title, can't get this otherwise flat Roundabout Theatre production of Sean O'Casey's 1924 tragicomedy off the ground. The script dramatizes the reach of Irish political violence and its appalling personal costs, but here most of the characters aren't played engagingly enough to interest the audience. As a result, a compelling tragedy has been transformed into a collection of somewhat amusing and occasionally sad clichés. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

LES MIZRAHI

The fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi has an endearing and winning personality, which sets this cabaret act aglow. But Mizrahi's mélange of songs, conversation, and sewing has been staged and rehearsed to death by Richard Move. It's not until he moves into the house for a brief improvised interlude to dole out Rice Krispies treats that the audience gets to experience the real Mizrahi. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 239-6200.)

LIFEGAME

A show by the British troupe Improbable Theatre, in which a different onstage guest's life story be-

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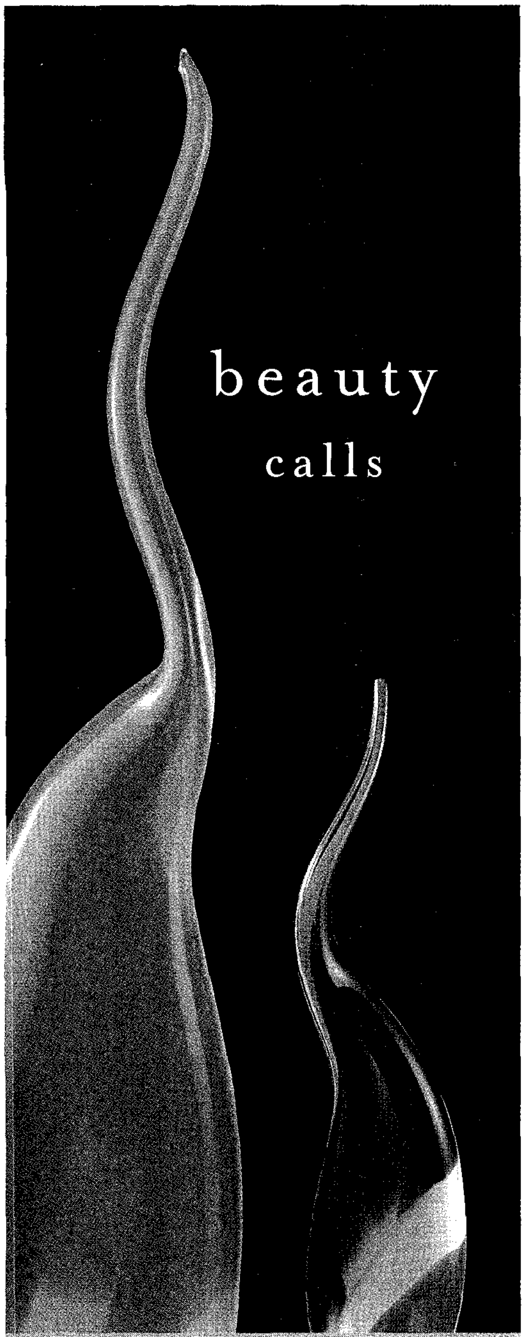

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comes the basis of the improv drama each night. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

THE LIGHT OUTSIDE
From the Flea Theatre, a black domestic comedy by Kate Robin. (41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407.)

LIVING IN THE WIND
Cheryl Freeman and Chad L. Coleman portray married ex-slaves trying to rebuild their lives after the Civil War, in a romantic drama by Michael Bradford. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

MAYBE BABY, IT'S YOU
Love in the big city, explained with many laughs by the show's accomplished writer-performers, Charlie Shanian and Shari Simpson. There's an undercurrent of sweetness and longing that makes the evening more than a series of skits. (Theatre at St. Luke's, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE
The Adobe Theatre Company's modern take on the Greek myth. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 279-4200.)

PROOF
The Manhattan Theatre Club's staging of David Auburn's drama, starring Mary-Louise Parker, is reopening on Broadway. Daniel Sullivan is the director. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

RICHARD III
The Pearl Theatre Company's version of Shakespeare's play. (80 St. Mark's Pl. 505-3401.)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
Richard O'Brien's 1975 cult musical, directed by Christopher Ashley and choreographed by Jerry Mitchell. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

STRANGER
In Craig Lucas's new play, two strangers with dicey pasts meet on a plane—a man fresh from a long prison term (David Strathairn), who has given his life over to Jesus, and a woman damaged by her liberal parents' neglect ("They just love their skis"), who has amply demonstrated her own capacity for doing damage (Kyra Sedgwick). Lucas has in the past memorably dramatized life's ambiguities, but the road he's taken here has led him into a thicket of dull incomprehensibility; the characters arrive at their destination at the end of the first act, but for the audience the entire play is a long trip to nowhere. Directed by Mark Brokaw. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303. Closes Nov. 19.)

THE SYRINGA TREE
A tour-de-force solo drama, written by and starring South African native and first-time playwright Pamela Gien, who gives an extraordinary performance in all twenty-three roles. It's a love story, really, about the strong, lasting bond between a white girl and her black nanny in South Africa, which begins in 1965 and continues through the following twenty years of turbulent and violent upheavals over apartheid. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

TABLETOP
Rob Ackerman's real-time comedy, a behind-the-scenes look at television-commercial making. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's satire of New York intellectual angst, staged by Manhattan Theatre Club, moves to Broadway. Linda Lavin, Tony Roberts, and Michele Lee star. Lynn Meadow is the director. (3/20/00) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

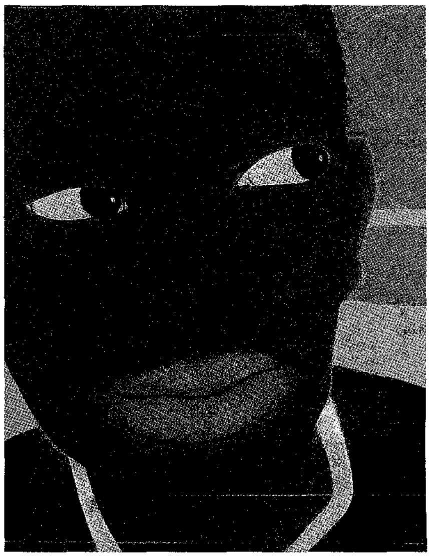
TALLULAH HALLELUJAH!
Tovah Feldshuh's engaging portrait of Tallulah Bankhead is set in 1956, at a U.S.O. benefit, where the stage-and-screen siren (played by Feldshuh) regales the audience with the lowdown on her life, several marvellous standards, and a bunch of charmingly dirty limericks. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE UNEXPECTED MAN
There are only two actors in this small gem by Yasmina Reza, the author of "Art," but they are not just any two—they are Alan Bates and the magnificent Eileen Atkins, who are sharing a compartment on a Paris-to-Frankfurt train. He is a writer, and she, unbeknownst to him, is his ideal reader; their private reflections weave around and play off each other until the two passengers finally address each other directly. Reza's artfulness in presenting their thoughts—his discontent, her insightful analysis of his books and rueful reminiscences of friendships—makes this a very grownup play about separateness and connection, about the art of life. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (11/6/00) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

WHAT THE BUTLER SAW
The New Group's staging of Joe Orton's 1969 play stars Chloë Sevigny, Dylan Baker, Lisa Emery, and Peter Frechette. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

DANCE

"MICHAEL MOSCHEN IN MOTION"
The MacArthur-grant-winning juggler offers recently invented techniques along with his trademark maneuvers, including one in which he walks through a wooden triangle while keeping multiple rubber balls bouncing multidirectionally. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 14-17 and Nov. 21 at 8, Nov. 18 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 19 at 2 and 7:30. Through Nov. 26.)



Youssou N'Dour plays the Great African Ball, at the Hammerstein Ballroom.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

PARSONS DANCE COMPANY
The choreographers David Parsons and Robert Battle present seventy-five minutes of work, including the company's strobe-lit signature, "Caught," and "Strange Humors," a staged argument that takes the form of a tango. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Nov. 16-17 and Nov. 21 at 7, Nov. 18 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 19 at noon and 5. Through Nov. 26.)

"STILL LIVES"
The choreographer Vicky Schick collaborates with the artist Barbara Kilpatrick on two works whose movements begin in everyday actions. Schick and Meg Wolfe dance the opening duet; Margarita Guergue, Juliette Mapp, and Jodi Melnick perform a trio that begins on a stage littered with props from the previous work. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Nov. 15-18 at 8.)

"VOCALSCAPES"
The marvellously inventive vocalist Philip Hamilton uses a variety of voice loops and electronic-feedback mechanisms to improvise elaborate harmonies with his own voice. On this outing, he collaborates with the choreographers Ronald K. Brown, Katiti King, and Kevin Wynn, and the musicians Peter Jones and Carl Carter. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Nov. 16-18 at 8:30 and Nov. 19 at 7:30.)

"ANOTHER TELEPATHIC THING"
Big Dance Theatre, under the direction of Paul Lazar and choreographer Annie-B Parson, recasts Mark

Twain's "The Mysterious Stranger" as the story of Satan in L.A., using sections from actual Hollywood audition tapes. (The Performing Garage, 35 Wooster St. 966-3651. Nov. 15-18 at 8. Through Dec. 9.)

"PEARL RIVER"
The choreographers Stacy Dawson and David Neumann mix chop-socky fight sequences with the stylized movement of Chinese Opera in a series of duets set to the soundtrack for Jackie Chan's "Spiritual Kung Fu." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Nov. 17-18 at 10:30 and Nov. 19 at 8. Through Nov. 26.)

PILAR RIOJA
The *reina* of Spanish dance, in her twenty-eighth New York season, presents ninety minutes of traditional Iberian forms, including the *soleá*, an introspective solo, and the *tiento antiguo*, or old style, performed in a stately flamenco rhythm. (Repertorio Español, 138 W. 27th St. 889-2850. Nov. 14-15 at 7, Nov. 16 at 7:30, Nov. 17 at 8, Nov. 18 at 3, and Nov. 19 at 6.)

"BONES OF THE EARTH"
Dancers and yogis, including Cyndi Lee, Heidi Latsky, Sondra Loring, and Wendell Beavers, present a group of works inspired (or at least influenced) by their practice of yoga. (OM Yoga Center, 135 W. 14th St. 229-0267. Nov. 17-18 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

MORCHEEBA
Two years ago, this London-based trio quietly made one of the best albums of the nineties, the aptly named "Big Calm." Led by vocalist Skye Edwards, who doesn't so much sing as hover, the band presented a stylish wash of low-riding strings and trip-hop grooves—music that was equally at home in a smoky club or on your bedroom stereo. Edwards was accused of being emotionally distant, but that was exactly the point—her supremely cool vocals had an almost narcotic effect. On the band's recent follow-up, the much anticipated and ultimately disappointing "Fragments of Freedom," second-rate material brought Morcheeba thudding down from its peak. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Nov. 15 at 8.)

CARNEGIE HALL JAZZ ORCHESTRA
It may not have been his intention, but the innovative theatrical composer Jerome Kern provided a small mine of gems for jazz musicians to work with. The beauty and durability of his perfectly constructed songs, including "All the Things You Are," "Yesterdays," and "Ol' Man River," have inspired countless improvisations since the early decades of the last century. Alto saxophonist **Jackie McLean,** a tough but tender player of genius, will invoke the bop and hard-bop eras' dependence on Kern's repertoire. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 16 at 8.)

JANE MONHEIT
All of a sudden everyone's doing cartwheels whenever Monheit's name is mentioned. A pretty woman with a pretty voice singing pretty songs, Monheit may not be on the cutting edge, but she's beginning to soothe some general need for comfortable vocalizing. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, 165 W. 65th St. 721-6500. Nov. 16 at 8.)

NEW YORK AUTUMN BLUES FESTIVAL
Nov. 17: **Bobby Rush** and **Otis Clay.** ♦ Nov. 18: The Acoustic Summit features **Joe Louis Walker, Billy Branch,** and **Matt (Guitar) Murphy.** Also on the bill is **Alvin Youngblood Hart.** ♦ Nov. 19: The New York City début of **James (Super Chikan) Johnson.** (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. All shows at 8.)

"THE GREAT AFRICAN BALL"
When the Senegalese singer **Youssou N'Dour** performs in Dakar, it's often at a marathon dance party called a *soirée dansante*, in which he takes the stage at midnight and plays until the crowd stops moving and shaking, usually at dawn. Here, backed by his fourteen-piece band, the Super Étoile, he presents a local version of the event, starting and ending a bit earlier but packing the same rhythmic punch. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Nov. 19 at 9.)

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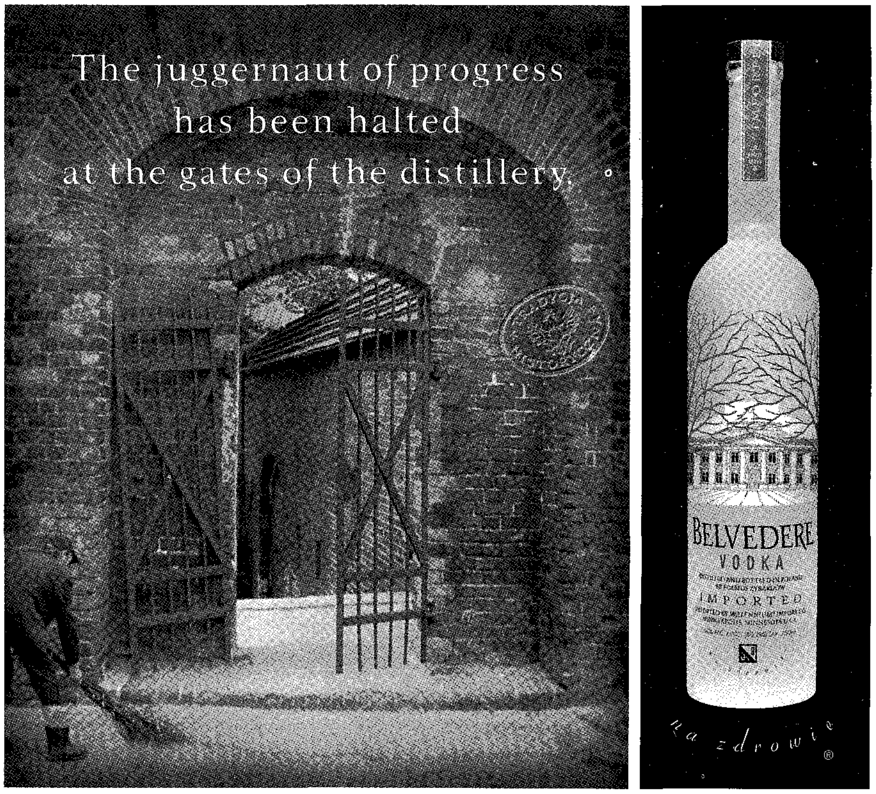

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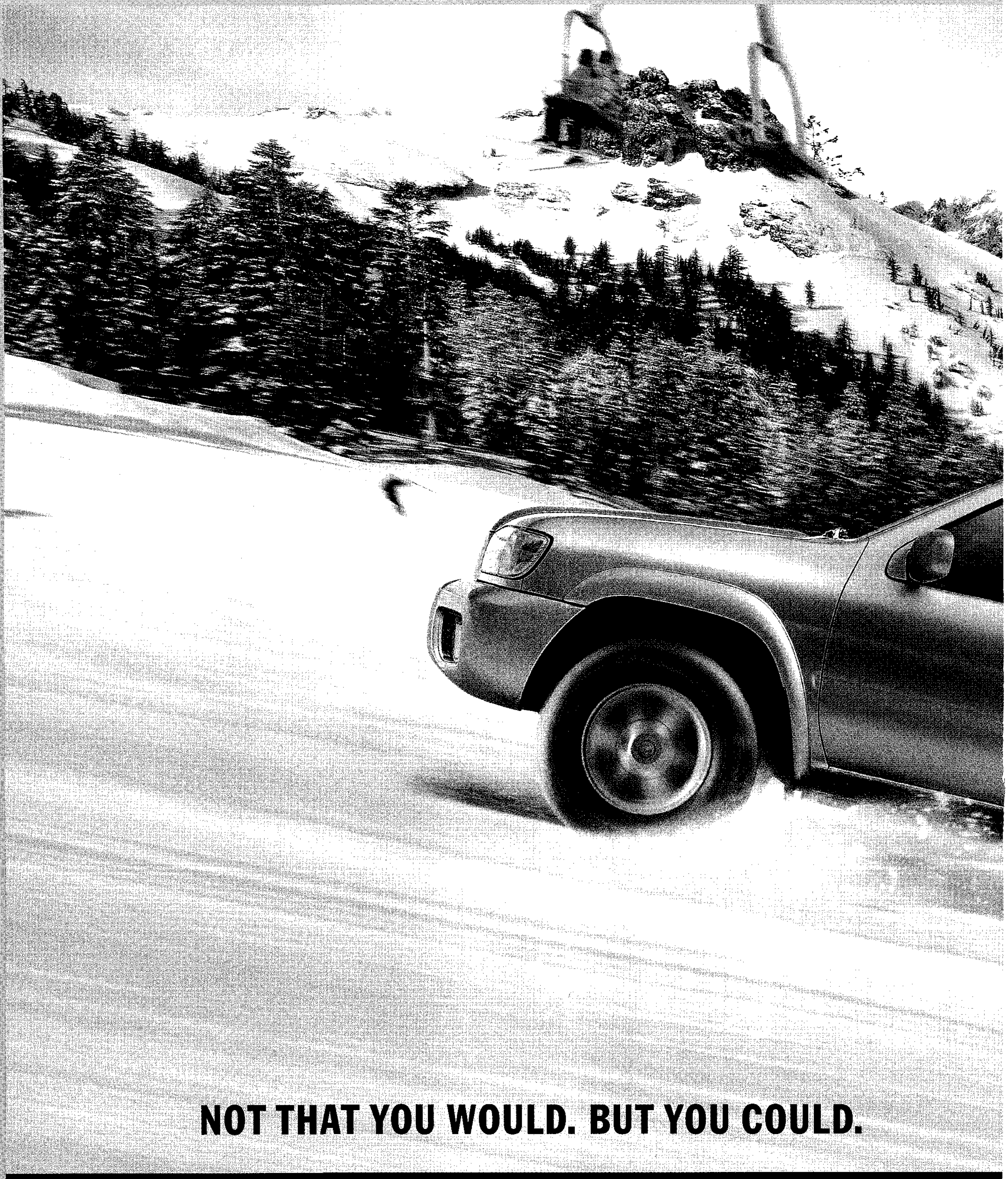

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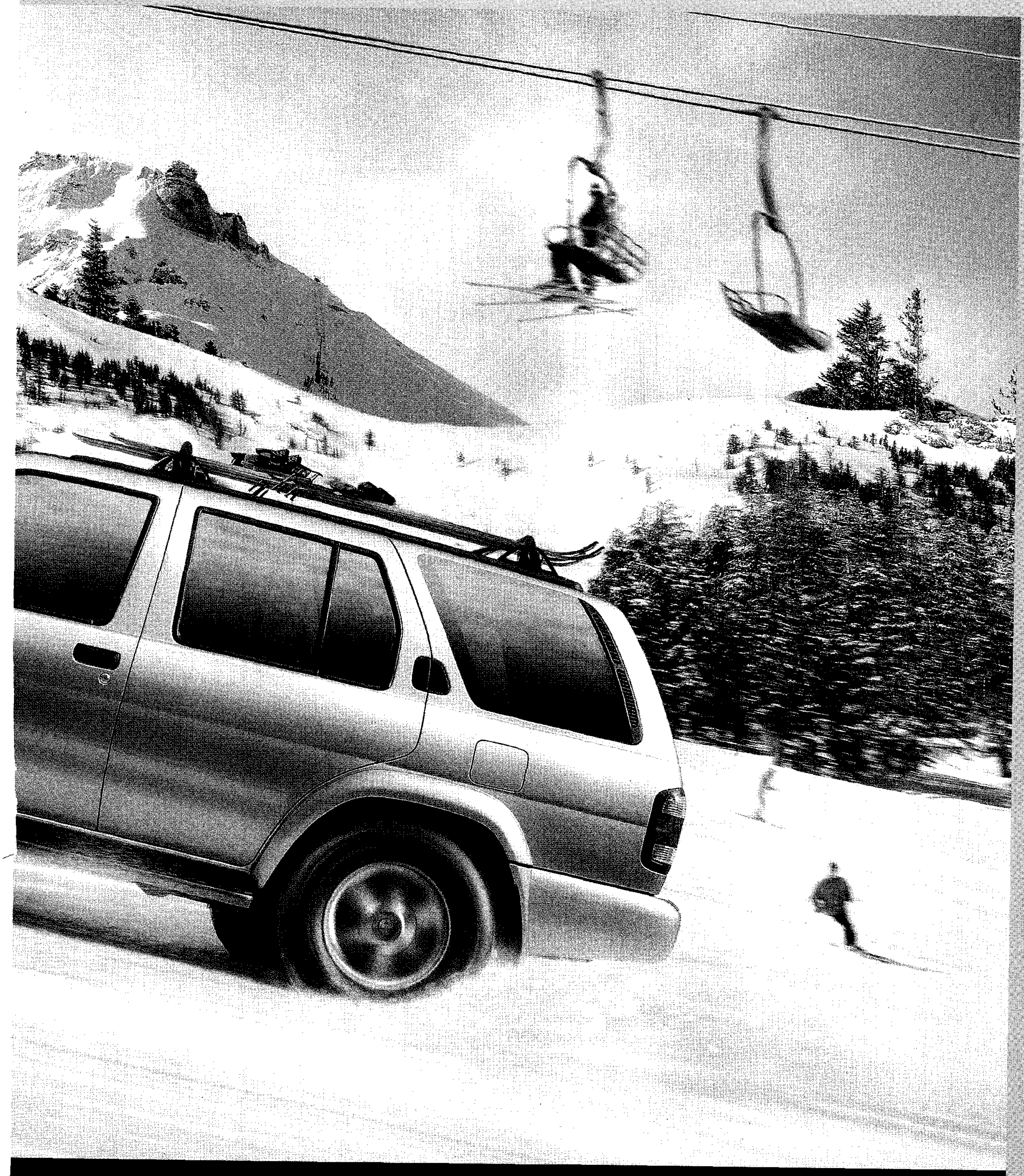

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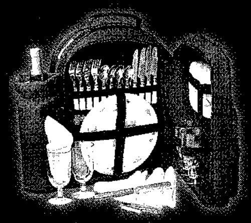

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CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
243 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Nov. 17-19: **Brian Wilson,** an icon of composition whose contributions to the American songbook rank alongside those of Copland, Gershwin, and Bernstein.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Nov. 18: **Suzanne Vega,** a one-woman seminar on the difficulties of sustaining a career in the record business. Vega has spent the past decade suffering the indignities of commercial irrelevance. Despite two exquisite albums, "99.9 F" (1992) and "Nine Objects of Desire" (1996), the waifish one has never been able to recapture the spotlight she earned with "Luka," even as she makes evocative and accessible pop. With **Jack Hardy,** who is as much a fixture on the New York City folk scene as the Empire State Building is on Thirty-fourth Street.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Nov. 16: **They Might Be Giants** hits the stage, backed by a brass orchestra. Nov. 17: **Man or Astro-Man?** These space-age stowaways from Alabama play lo-fi surf music punctuated with sci-fi samples from the fifties. Nov. 18: Singer-songwriter **Dan Bern** (who also refers to himself simply as Bernstein) is one of the more original performers to have infiltrated the pop scene. His dark, post-folk narratives are as tuneful as they are hysterical.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Nov. 18: Not since the blues of Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry has there been a duo as compatible and downright mystifying as the Iowa natives **Greg Brown** and **Bo Ramsey.** Brown's earthy groan, full of wit and wisdom and accompanied by the slick, ethereal electric-guitar work of Ramsey, is nothing short of inspiring. Brown is a seasoned professional who has spent half of his twenty-plus years on the road in the company of Ramsey. This tour is Brown's last before a year-long hiatus. Catch them now at the peak of their success. With **Casey Chambers,** Australia's top female country vocalist. Nov. 20: A night of twenty-first-century bossa nova, with **Bebel Gilberto.** Nov. 21: The clear-voiced and clear-eyed singer-songwriter **Dar Williams.**

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 16: Though they've trimmed themselves down to a trio, the members of **Don Caballero** continue to redefine the space-time continuum with the skill of their impenetrable rhythm section and their guitarist, Ian Williams. The band's latest album, "American Don," is a kaleidoscope of unpredictable time changes, melodies, and guitar loops that intertwine in a perfect pattern of harmony and discord.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Nov. 16: Mississippi-hill-country blues legend **R. L. Burnside.** Nov. 17: **Casey Chambers** (see Irving Plaza).

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—Nov. 17: **Phillip Johnston's Transparent Quartet.** Evoking West Coast jazz as easily as it reinvents the conventions of silent-film music, the Transparent Quartet weaves together the leader's saxophones with vibraphone, piano, and bass, pumping iron-rich blood into contemporary chamber jazz. With the **Fisyo Orchestra,** from the Czech Republic.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—He may be the world's most famous jazz bassist, but being a perennial gun for hire has never been enough for

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Sheet Music

Sky-high thread counts, seductive as they may be, aren't the only things worth pursuing when you're shopping for fine linens. There are equally compelling if less quantifiable pleasures, like the fun of choosing a monogram in an age when personal touches have largely disappeared, or the impulsive decision to go with lime-green percales after a lifetime of whites.

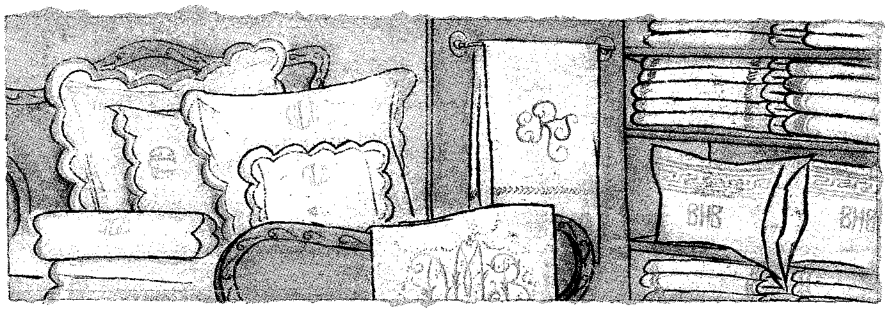
At **LÉRON** (750 Madison Ave.; 753-6700), an eighty-five-year-old store with merchandise so exquisite that words like "sheets" and "shams" scarcely do it justice, the store manager takes a dim view of the thread-count obsession: "After about three-eighty or so," she says, "it just doesn't matter." Though the store specializes in custom orders and has a tony clientele—"We know how many points to embroider in a duke's crown"—not everything costs a king's ransom. A line called the Début Collection offers four-piece sets of exquisitely bedecked Egyptian-cotton sheets for under $500. If the seasonal table linens look old-fashioned, there's a reason: the shop keeps patterns in circulation for decades.

Across the street, the Milanese **FRETTE** (799 Madison Ave.; 988-5221) has ultra-sophisticated jewel-toned linens in deep rubies and sapphires for around $600 per four-piece set. ("All our products are made in pure cotton," the catalogue patiently explains. "Top 500 thread counts, bottom 300 thread counts.") Along with the sheets, the store carries a silk-backed, sheared-mink throw that manages to avoid looking like something that was smuggled out of the Playboy mansion ($9,000). For around the same price, **FRANÇOISE NUNNALLE,** who specializes in antique linens (by appointment, 246-4281), will sell you a circa-1850 museum-quality French table-cloth patterned with minuet-dancing couples and embellished with both *point de Venise* and filet lace ($8,500). Among Nunnalle's extraordinary collection of oversized serviettes are eight superb Art Nouveau napkins ($560) that might have graced William Morris's sideboard. (They are made of a rare Czech damask, which is pretty much the only kind Nunnalle deals in.)

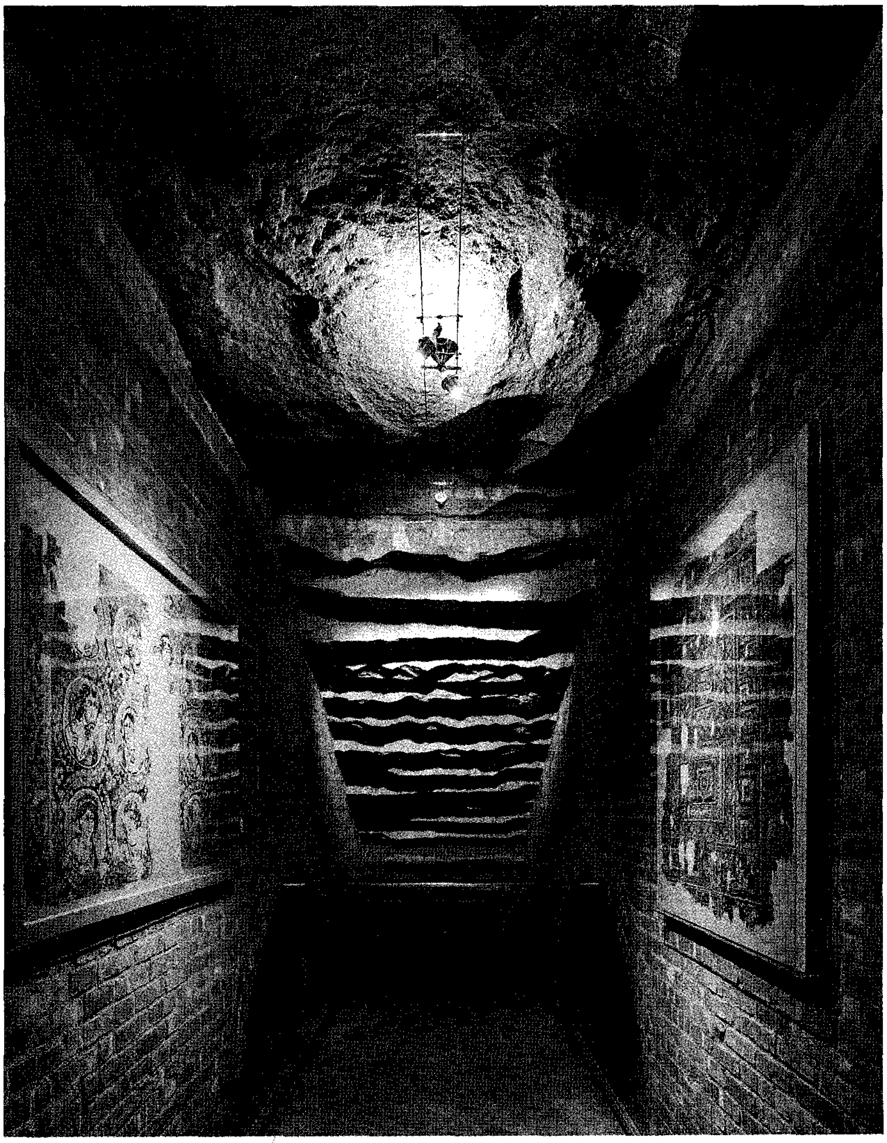
Below Fourteenth Street, things are a little less formal. At **BELLORA** (156 Wooster St.; 982-1147), Egyptian-cotton-and-linen-blend sheets have been finished with a special process that imitates the effect of a dozen-plus washes, to insure softness (around $200). The cotton makes them practical, while the linen imparts other virtues: "It's strong! They used it to wrap mummies!" the salesman remarks, before putting in his two cents on the thread-count business: "Who cares if it's a high thread count if it's lousy thread?"

The venerable **HARRIS LEVY** (278 Grand St.; 226-3102) not only has deep vitrines and a stamped-tin ceiling but also something else conspicuously absent from other fine linen shops: a bargain bin. A full range of brand-name goods is here at substantial savings. On a recent Sunday—still the big shopping day in this neighborhood—the stock included black-and-white bed linens, clearly influenced by the house of Versace, and a tea-rose coverlet with an appliquéd lace monogram which could have been the pride and joy of Harris and Esther Levy when they set up shop (actually, a pushcart) in the neighborhood a hundred and six years ago.

—*Lynn Yaeger*



EDEL RODRIGUEZ



WHAT LIES BENEATH *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, forbidden to expand farther into Central Park, has begun looking for underused space in its own halls. The new gallery, which is located under the grand staircase, opens this week with a display of art from the Byzantine Empire. Photograph by Robert Polidori.*

Ron Carter (here Nov. 15-18). A fine composer and a crafty bandleader—the nucleus of the celebrated band Sphere was once his rhythm section—Carter is now leading a nonet, which should provide him with all the tonal coloring he needs to present his case as a significant artist. Dining.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY

540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—**Barbara Cook** is in command of this urbane dinner-and-music room through Nov. 25. Her voice remains almost defiantly that of the nineteen-fifties Broadway ingénue, and her material is as winning as a gardenia corsage. Dining.

IRIDIUM

48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Nov. 19: Some highly spirited and swinging players—including the pianist **Eric Reed,** the guitarist **Mark Whitfield,** the saxophonists **Donald Harrison** and **Craig Handy,** and the drummer **Carl Allen**—make up the jazz ensemble Spirituals to Swing. Good playing meets good feeling. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

RUE B

188 Avenue B (358-1700)—**Joel Forrester,** the maestro of the wonderful People Like Us ensemble, remains a most agreeably eclectic pianist, and among the most undervalued of jazz composers. The sheer pleasure he brings to a panoply of styles, and to the individual way he absorbs them all, denotes comfort rather than scholarly erudition. He's enthroned here at the keyboard Monday nights in November.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Nov. 19: The **Bill Charlap** trio. Sometimes the good guys do get a break. After years of insider status, the pianist Charlap is beginning to find his way to a wider public. His first recording on a major jazz label, the newly released "Written in the Stars," and a début at this venerable club are sure signs that confidently swinging lyrical piano playing is coming into vogue again. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"The Year One: Art of the Ancient World East and West,"** a selection of antiquities from the permanent collection, all of which were created around 1 A.D. Through Jan. 14. ♦ **"Art and the Empire City"** presents paintings, photographs, and decorative art from one of New York's early periods of irrational exuberance, between the completion of the Erie Canal, in 1825, and the beginning of the Civil War, in 1861. Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes."** Through Feb. 4. ♦ **"The Divine Comtesse"** presents photographs, by Pierre-Louis Pierson, of the Countess de Castiglione (1837-99). Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Queen Victoria and Thomas Sully"** gathers the oil portraits, oil sketches, drawings, and other ephemera connected with the preparation of the full-length portrait (also on view) by Sully, the British-born Philadelphia artist. Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Open Ends,"** the third and final installment of **"MOMA 2000,"** the yearlong exhibition devoted to the art of the past century, covers art from 1960 to the present. Like its predecessors, the current show is divided into segments; this first one includes several large-scale works and installations, by Cai Guo-Qiang, James Rosenquist, Pipilotti Rist, Cindy Sherman, and Gerhard Richter, which suggest the themes that the later segments amplify. Through Jan. 2. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

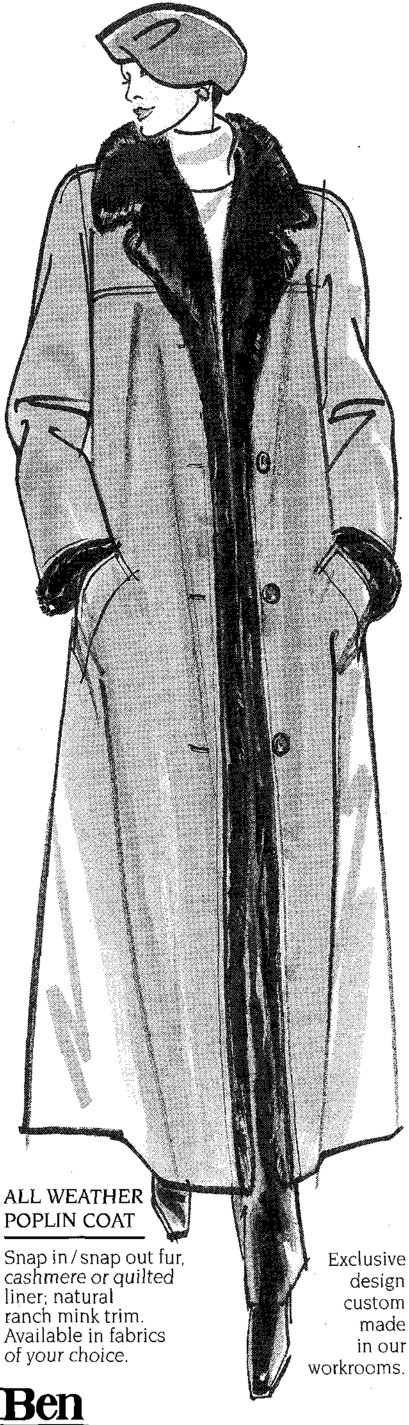
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—With Wright presiding and Armani in residence, it doesn't seem as if there would be room for another artist at the Guggenheim, but Robert Wilson's design for the Giorgio Armani retrospective makes the sometime director look indispensable. The show's first room, on the top floor, houses items from Armani's Spring 2000 line, which seems to detour into Versace's terrain, and is as hard to take as those fluorescent clothes. Six floors of the rotunda redeem it. Wilson has blocked the ramps off from the atrium with scrims of carefully tailored cream-colored cotton that marry Wright's curves and Armani's material. Against this backdrop, ghostly groups of disembodied clothes, curves spookily filled out, spaghetti straps held up by stitched-on wire, are perfectly draped and lit, and arranged by their influence and style. Armani's designs and his "non-color palette," of black, white, and every neutral in between, are so agreeably elegant and comfortable that it's tempting to check the souvenir shop for a seamstress. Through Jan. 17. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Edward Steichen began as a pictorialist, photographing the sweet and fuzzy scenes fashionable in the first decades of the twentieth century—it's tough to tell the early prints in this retrospective from his smudgy pastel paintings of the same era. Later, he began experimenting with sharper focus and stronger lines, turning still-lifes of vegetables into stark modernist abstractions, and he came to see photography as a way to make a strong and immediate impression. Not coincidentally, his commercial work for magazines and advertisements became highly salable. Steichen's celebrity portraits—of Garbo and Dietrich for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*—still look contemporary. When he gave up such work, famous and financially secure but estranged from many of the noncommercial artists he'd known in the past, he took over the direction of MOMA's nascent photography department. Even there, he couldn't shake his popular touch: his blockbuster overview of the medium, "The Family of Man," which is nicely documented here, travelled for ten years and sold millions of catalogues. Through Feb. 4. ♦ **"Roni Horn: Still Water (The River Thames, for Example), 1999."** Through Jan. 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—**"Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga"** marks the millennial anniversary of the Viking North American landing with an exhibition of such artifacts as graffiti, plunder, a reconstructed longboat, and a Norse penny, and a variety of dioramas. Through Jan. 21. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)



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BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—A retrospective devoted to Lee Krasner ends its national tour in the artist's birthplace. Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"Hip-Hop Nation: Roots, Rhymes, and Rage"** presents videos, clothing and accessories, manuscripts of lyrics, F.B.I. letters, magazine covers, and installations that catalogue reactions to the genre. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Gold of the Nomads: Scythian Treasures from Ancient Ukraine."** Through Jan. 21. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (849-8300)—The Vitra Design Museum, in Wellem am Rhein, Germany, seems to be made of chairs, the way some other institutions are made of money. Among those on loan are Thomas E. Warren's patented centripetal-spring model, Shiro Kuramata's Lucite lady (he's dubbed it "Miss Blanche") embedded with plastic flowers, George Nelson's "marshmallow" sofa, and plenty of stacking chairs of various levels of sophistication. An Eames modular storage unit makes it clear why connoisseurs decry design knock-offs and counterfeits—the real thing is better. (Those who actually want to sit down may be glad to find the conversation pit in the Alexander Girard exhibition upstairs.) Through Feb. 4. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, is the patron of this exhibition, which seems designed to demonstrate that Muslims and Jews are living comfortably together under his benign glory, if not elsewhere. "Morocco: Jews and Art in a Muslim Land" covers two thousand years of more or less peaceful cohabitation as seen from the outside, by visiting academic painters, early photographers, and contemporary filmmakers (whose work appears on two large screens), and from within, in displays of everyday items made and used by the close-knit community. Morocco's Jews share some traditions with the area's Muslim community, including the worship of regional saints. Their crafts, including sacred objects and ceremonial clothing, seem influenced by their neighbors'. Through Feb. of 2001. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

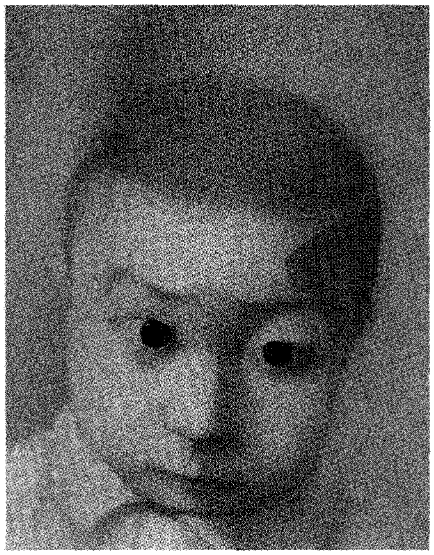
GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

SUSAN HARTNETT
With their slashes and jabs of velvety charcoal, Hartnett's new drawings appear to be calligraphic abstractions. One realizes with a slight, pleasurable shock, however, that they are something else also: portraits of wild grasses. Carefully dated and identified (American dune grass, bluejoint grass, prairiecord grass), each has the entrancing specificity of a pressed specimen. Hartnett's larger pastel drawings have the same empirical spirit: each memorializes a walk along the Maine coast and its environs. Here, however, it's harder to sense the specific connection to landscape, and her worked, wristy markings revert to a Twomblyesque handsomeness. Through Nov. 25. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.)

R. B. KITAJ
When Cecily Brown observed that the erect penis has been underrepresented in art, she was forgetting about Kitaj's prurient, beautiful pastels from the seventies, some of which are on view here. The main event, however, is Kitaj's recent work, most of it completed since the artist moved from London to Los Angeles three years ago. As usual, his pictures are unapologetically allusive: Christ, Picasso, Ruskin, Captain Dreyfus, and the Marx Brothers all appear. So does the artist himself, nestled sorrowfully in his late wife's pubic hair. Kitaj has plenty of faults: he can be cursory, hermetic, and excessively distrustful of his own draftsmanship. But who else pours out the contents of an unruly, obsession-charged intellect with so much candor and skill? Through Dec. 2. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.)

FRANK STELLA
"Love Letters and Correspondence" seems a delightfully unexpected title for a Stella exhibition, but, of course, it's another highbrow appropriation, this time from Heinrich von Kleist, the nineteenth-century German playwright, whose works are apparently on the artist's bedside table, right beside his battered copy of Melville. No doubt some earnest graduate student will eventually make the connections clear. In the meantime, viewers will enjoy small wall-mounted sculptures like "To Heinrich Lohse, Dresden, April, 1803" for their knobby density and gaudy, abrasive color. Through Dec. 22. (Mathes, 41 E. 57th St. 752-5135.)



Work by Zhang Xiaogang, at Protetch.

DAVID TRUE
True paints brightly colored rooms where young boys, satyrs, and animals act out coy narratives. In the most legible of these, "Self-Mastery," a nude youth, Onan, seems to be weaning himself from the pleasures of solitude with the help of a pair of white woollen mittens. The imagination at work here is intriguingly quirky, but the stiff, uncertain technique cools one's curiosity. Through Nov. 18. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

TOM WESSELMAN
Since 1961, when he began his "Great American Nude" series, Wesselman has been making libidinous Pop icons, usually based on sketches of his wife, Claire. He's still at it. The latest group, "Blue Nudes," are big, simple, aluminum cutouts, with fat black contour lines snaking through areas of brilliant cobalt and ultramarine. They're striking and pleasing in a way that conjures up images of fashion illustration and of Wesselman's declared inspiration, Matisse. Through Dec. 9. (Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888.)

"MAQUETTES, MODELS, AND MUSES"
An impressive selection of figurative sculpture, all by male artists and mostly cast in bronze and celebrating the female form. The works range from a tabletop version of Rodin's "The Kiss," cast in 1900, to a large and lumpy Eric Fischl statue of a bending woman, from 1992. The show includes work by Degas, Giacometti, and Moore, but its highlights—for instance, a Gaston Lachaise study of his wife from the mid-thirties—come from left field. Her wide hips, round breasts, and ample belly suggest a modern-day Venus of Willendorf. Through Dec. 2. (Winston Wächter Mayer, 89 E. 78th St. 327-2526.)

Short List

TONY CRAGG
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St.
977-7160. Through Dec. 30.
WILLEM DE KOONING
C & M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. 861-0020.
Through Dec. 2.
CY TWOMBLY
Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 77th St.
744-2313. Through Jan. 27.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

CARL ANDRE
Thirty-two sculptures by Carl Andre would normally overtax the space of any museum, but an annex of the Cooper Gallery contains them easily. Why? Because they're tiny. Floor-hugging arrays of metal squares and wooden bars amount to an Andre retrospective in miniature. There are also scatter pieces and a supine version of Brancusi's "Endless Column." Only one piece is not new: a row of steel strips that was shown underwater in MOMA's sculpture garden in 1973. (It's rusty.) The works don't know they're small. Their peremptory scale relations cast a spell, so that a viewer comes to feel freakishly gigantic. Through Nov. 18. (521 W. 21st St. 255-1105.)

OLAFUR ELIASSON
The Icelandic artist has transformed the interior of the gallery into an outdoor courtyard, in a way. He's removed the glass from a skylight, built a room the precise dimensions of the opening in the ceiling, and then covered its walls with mirrors, creating a wobbly illusion of infinite space. Like James Turrell and Robert Irwin before him, Eliasson finds magic in the least material of materials—light. A phenomenal installation, in every sense. Through Dec. 2. (Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144.)

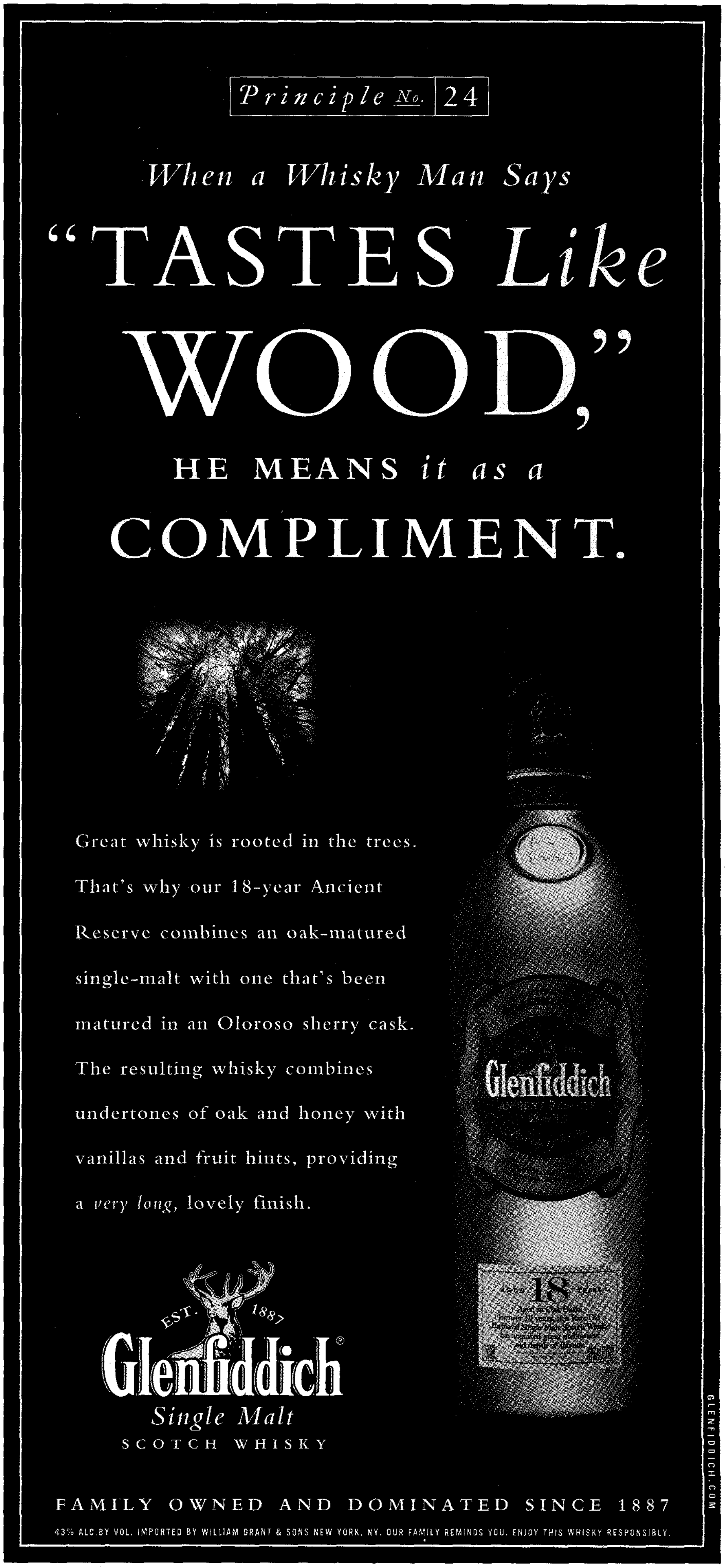
ZOE LEONARD
The saturnine Leonard keeps creating installations that take banal subjects and tired forms to startling pitches of menace and cool. She fills the floor of Cooper's huge main room with a hundred and sixty-two unclothed toy dolls of many types, eras, and degrees of damage, all standing face forward in staggered ranks. Doll art has been done, but the cumulative, staring intensity of these cuties works overtime. Through Nov. 25. (534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.)

Short List

POLLY APFELBAUM
D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St.
352-9460. Through Dec. 23.
DAMIEN HIRST
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.
Through Dec. 16.
BEATRIZ MILHAZES
Thorp, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St.
691-6565. Through Nov. 25.
MATTHEW RITCHIE
Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.
Through Nov. 25.
ZHANG XIAOGANG
Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999.
Through Nov. 25.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

JASON RHOADES
Every work is a work in progress in the methodically mad world of this California artist, and in this show he carries that idea to its logical extreme. One or the other of two shiny aluminum facsimiles of Sutter's Mill (as luck and history would have it, the mill that sparked the California gold rush was located on the same site as Rhoades' father's vegetable garden) is constructed, dismantled, and rebuilt in the gallery every day. There's always something of the overturned toy chest to Rhoades' installations, and the mills here look like nothing so much as giant Tinkertoys. Through Nov. 18. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)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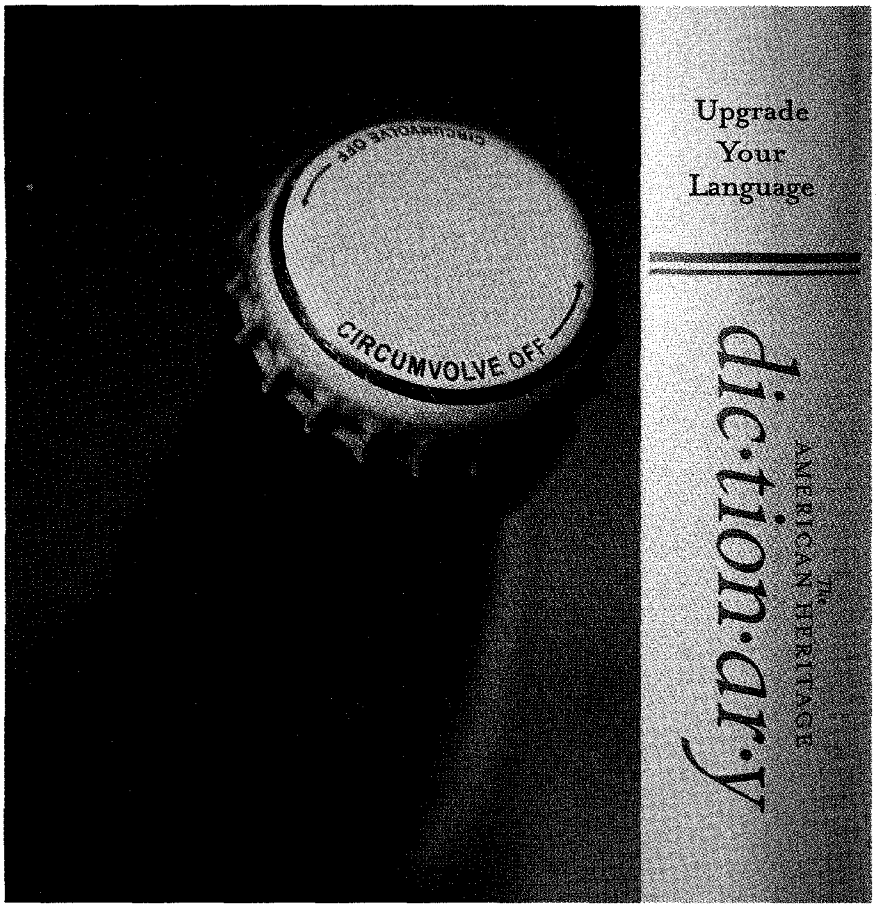

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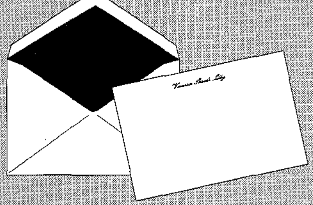

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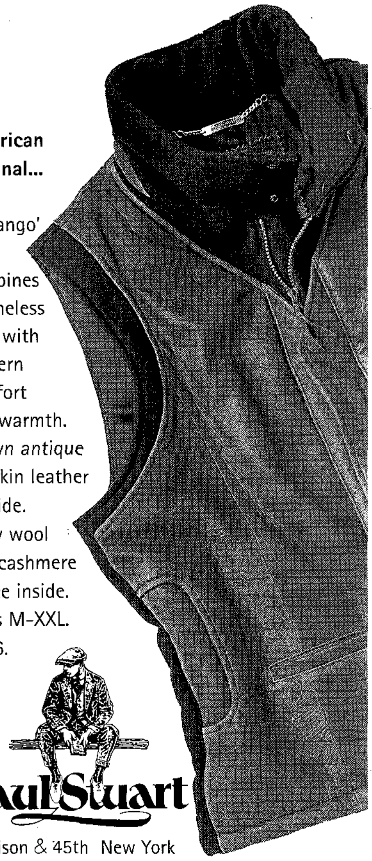

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KIM DINGLE
Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St. 431-3685. Through Dec. 22.

JOHN WATERS
American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. 941-0401. Through Dec. 30.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Nov. 15: The conclusion of a two-day sale of contemporary painting and sculpture. ♦ Nov. 18 at 2: Art from sub-Saharan Africa, from the collection of Egon Guenther. Items include three Angolan (probably Tshokwe) clubs and a Yombe *nkisi* figure used in healing rituals. ♦ Nov. 18 at 10 A.M. and 2: An auction of fine wines, featuring selections from the cellar of Manhattan's Union Square Café. ♦ Nov. 18 at 10:15 A.M.: Sales of African and Oceanian sculpture and objects. ♦ Nov. 20 at 2: An auction of pre-Columbian art. ♦ Nov. 20 at 7 and Nov. 21 at 10:15 A.M.: An auction of Latin-American paintings and objects, including works by Botero, Kahlo, and Tamayo, along with Arnaud Julien Pallière's "Panorama of the City of São Paulo" (1821). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Nov. 15-16: The house's inaugural sale of postwar art. Major items include Rothko's "Untitled (White, Yellow, Red on Yellow)" and Yves Klein's "RE 1," along with works by Richter, Warhol, and others. ♦ Nov. 16-17: An auction of contemporary art, including Charles Ray's anatomically precise "Male Mannequin," paintings by Schnabel and Basquiat, photographs by Cindy Sherman and Matthew Barney, and the eighty-three prints of the Netter Art Collection, to be sold as a single lot to benefit Médecins sans Frontières. ♦ Nov. 21-22: The house goes head to head with Sotheby's in its own sale of Latin-American paintings. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

SWANN
Nov. 16: An auction of rare editions from the Virgil C. Lutes Collection of 20th Century Literature, including books by Cheever, Faulkner, Hemingway, Welty, and Tennessee Williams. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

FALL ANTIQUES SHOW
The twenty-second annual show, specializing in American folk art, furniture, and objects of all kinds. (Park Avenue Armory, Park Ave. at 67th St. 777-5218. Nov. 16-19.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

INGE MORATH
As a young woman, Morath came to New York from Vienna and rang Saul Steinberg's doorbell. He answered wearing a paper-bag mask over his head; she took his picture. Their ensuing collaboration, hundreds of Morath photographs showing Steinberg and his friends in his masks, is represented here by more than fifty prints. Steinberg's drawings make these pictures interesting, but these pictures aren't the most interesting thing that ever happened to his work, which loses color, detail, and its characteristic dominance over his viewers' attention and imagination. The show may, more than anything, remind viewers to mourn his recent passing. Through Dec. 9. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051.)

MARGARET MORTON
In 1989, Morton noticed a shantytown in her neighborhood. She spent much of the next ten years seeking out similar makeshift homes and communities around New York, recording conversations with their residents, and photographing the homeless at home. Her high-contrast, black-and-white pictures fall somewhere between architectural and documentary photography, and make that combination work well. Her focus on the constructive (in both senses) act of building and the ease with which she complies with one subject's ultimatum, "If you can respect the

fact that I'm living here, we can get along," make the show less of a polemic than it might be. Through Nov. 30. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555.)

BILL STEBER

In "Stones in My Pathway: Mississippi Blues Photographs," Steber catches his subjects confronting sadness and pain with a triumphant form of self-expression—the blues. Rather than presenting portraits of famous musicians (Charlie Patton's is the only recognizable face, and it appears in a framed picture carried by an old woman in a back yard), Steber offers local Southern performers and the spirit of the music. His pictures of sharecroppers, spiritual healers, and skeletons express the weariness that catalyzes the blues' soul-cleansing spiritual redemption. Some seem to show the redemption itself—the arms of a woman rejoicing in a juke joint in one picture echo the position of the rickety wooden clothesline posts in another. Through Dec. 1. (Saba, 116 E. 16th St. 477-7722.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

I.C.P.'s redesigned midtown space, billed as the new Times Square's first museum, is now open, with three shows: Lorie Novak's "Collected Visions," Annie Leibovitz's "Women," and a survey of the Center's large permanent collection called "Reflections in a Glass Eye." Uptown, "Eugène Atget: The Pioneer" continues. (Uptown: 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6. Mid-

TABLES FOR TWO

SAUL

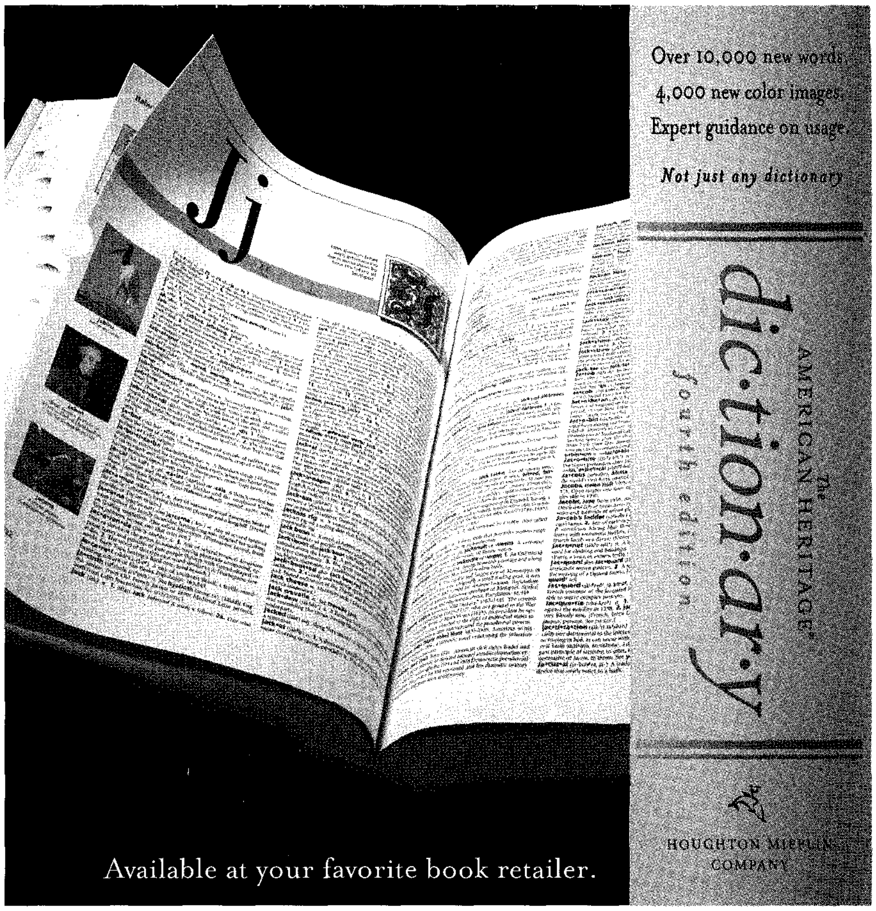
140 Smith St., Brooklyn (718-935-9844)—The Grocery, Banania Café, Patois, Smith Street Kitchen—so many hip new restaurants have popped up on this Brooklyn thoroughfare that it's hard to tell them apart. It's like junior year in high school: suddenly everyone's cool in exactly the same way. This summer, it was sautéed scallops, hanger steak, tarte Tatin. Now, it's foie gras and roast chicken. The F train runs under this part of Smith Street; does it connect the kitchens? There are small differences, of course: Banania has loud music, Patois tiny chalkboards for the list of specials, Grocery a chatty chef.

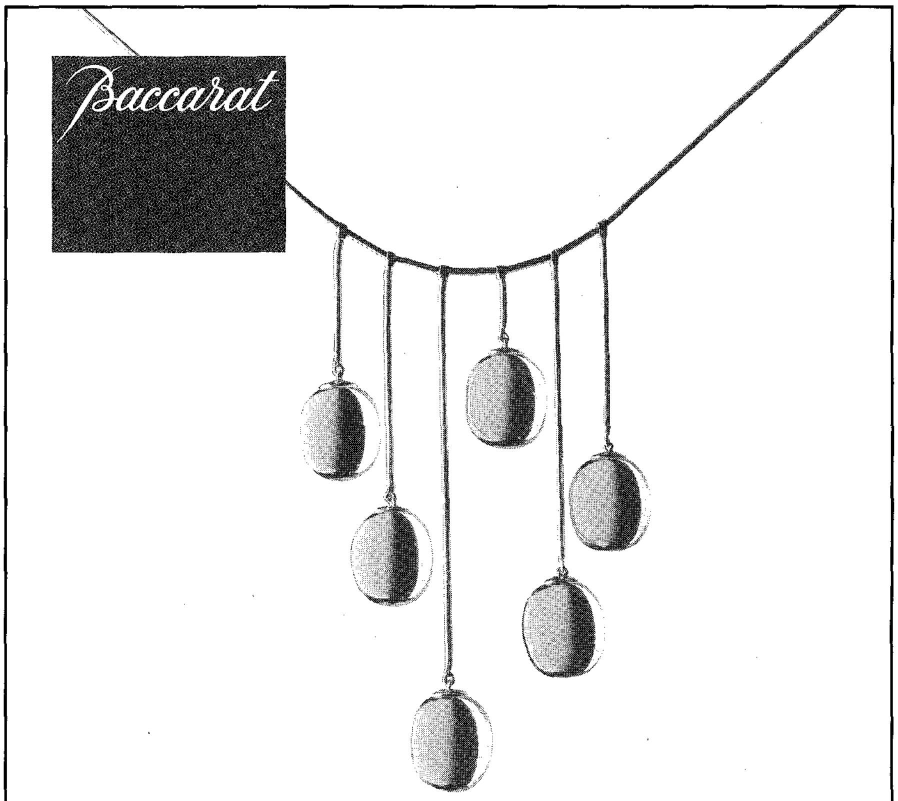
In this crowd, Saul, the northernmost joint on the strip, stands out for its lack of a gimmick. The room (a rehabbed storefront, like the rest of them) is pleasing and almost underdone: warm wood, exposed brick, tables with a little space. The waiters, who are neither French nor models, have a sweet, neighborly attitude; if you look chilled, one will bring you her sweater ("I just washed it!").

In such a no-fuss atmosphere, the food has a way of sneaking up on you. The chef, Saul Bolton, likes to mix fruit into his hearty dishes: The foie gras—sautéed and served warm with a thin, crispy crust—came with cherries in the summer. On the fall menu, the foie-gras sidekick is caramelized Macoun apple, and the cherries are now showing up in a sauce for the Muscovy duck. None of these concoctions are arch or forced; the tastes settle together so companionably that only the close menu reader is likely to recall what's behind the well-balanced combinations.

The wine list is so affordable that you suspect it must be government subsidized. Confronted by a couple facing the eternal meat-and-seafood conundrum, one waiter suggested a Kuentz Bas Riesling ($36): the dry wine with a slight sparkle went perfectly with both the rich rack of lamb in a traditional rosemary *jus* and the lighter sautéed scallops in a coconut emulsion. (Open daily for dinner. Entrées $18-$25.)

—*Kevin Conley*





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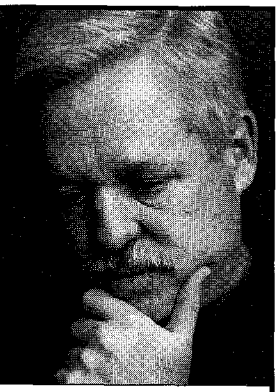

ARMISTEAD MAUPIN

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Short List

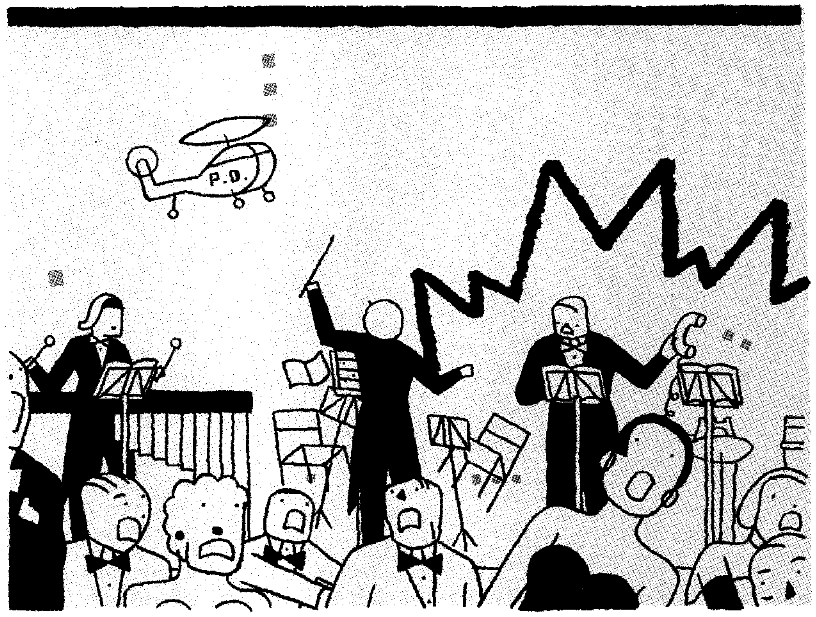
ANDREW BUSH
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 431-0147. Through Dec. 12.
LUCINDA DEVLIN
Rodgers, 529 W. 20th St. 414-9810. Through Dec. 16.
JITKA HANZLOVÁ
Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 807-9494. Through Nov. 25.
ABELARDO MORELL
Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Dec. 2.
CINDY SHERMAN
Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Though Jan. 6.
EDWARD STEICHEN
Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through Dec. 2.
EDWARD STEICHEN
Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through Dec. 30.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum and the Whitney Museum.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"**Die Zauberflöte**," with Angela Maria Blasi, Mary Dunleavy, Michael Schade, and Gerald Finley; conducted by Sebastian Weigle. (Nov. 15 at 7:30 and Nov. 18 at 8.) ♦ The Met's first performances this season of "**Der Rosenkavalier**," with Cheryl Studer, Kristine Jepson, Elizabeth Norberg-Schultz, and Eric Halfvarson; Jiří Kout. (Nov. 16 and Nov. 20 at 7:30.) ♦ "**Turandot**," with Jane Eaglen, Hei-Kyung Hong, Dennis O'Neill, and Paul Plishka; Marco Armiliato. (Nov. 17 and Nov. 21 at 8.) ♦ "**La Bohème**," with Elena Evseeva, Sondra Radvanovsky, Marcello Giordani, and Jean-Luc Chaignaud; Joseph Colaneri (in his Met début). (Nov. 18 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)
NEW YORK CITY OPERA
The company concludes its fall season this week: Handel's "**Rinaldo**," with Christine Goerke and Lisa Saffer, and countertenor David Daniels in the title role; Harry Bicket. (Nov. 15 at 7:30 and Nov. 18 at 8.) ♦ "**Le Nozze di Figaro**," with Cynthia Clayton, Kathleen Brett, George Cordes, and Jake Gardner; Steven Mosteller. (Nov. 16 at 7:30 and Nov. 18 at 1:30.) ♦ The company's new production of Verdi's "**Rigoletto**," with Christina Bouras, Gaëtan Laperrière, Misha Didyk, and Peter Volpe; George Manahan. (Nov. 17 at 8 and Nov. 19 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)
JUILLIARD OPERA CENTER
The student company presents Rossini's "La Cenerentola," conducted by Alessandro Siciliani and directed by Eve Shapiro. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 721-6500. Nov. 15 and Nov. 17 at 8 and Nov. 19 at 2.)
TEATRO GRATTACIELO
This is an intrepid company with a worthy goal: to revive the half-forgotten Italian operas of a century ago. Works by Cilèa, Mascagni, and Montemezzi were produced in the company's first three seasons; now comes the turn of Riccardo Zandonai (1883-1944), a composer known for his colorful orchestration and eclectic style. Since "Francesca da Rimini," which the Metropolitan last staged in 1984, is the only work of Zandonai's to remain in repertory, Grattacielo goes farther afield with the North American première of "I Cavalieri di Ekebù," a rustic, mystical tale of nineteenth-century Sweden which Toscanini introduced at La Scala in 1925. Robert Ashens conducts a cast that includes the tenor Gerard Powers, the contralto Mariana Paunova, and the Oratorio Society of New York. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. One performance only, Nov. 20 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES



Carnegie Hall hosts the U.S. première of Kagel's "Kidnapping in the Concert Hall."

LAURENT CILLUFFO

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
The orchestra celebrates the seventieth birthday of the American conductor Lorin Maazel with a two-week residency, his first appearance with the orchestra in almost twenty-five years. Maazel, the former director of the Cleveland and Pittsburgh orchestras, is an exacting musician with a taste for the grandiose, and he begins his engagement with "The Ring Without Words," an intermissionless orchestral tapestry (of his own devising) from Wagner's four-opera cycle. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Nov. 16-18 at 8 and Nov. 20 at 7:30.)

CHOIR OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA
Kent Tritle conducts the choir in Rachmaninoff's setting of the Orthodox Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, 980 Park Ave., at 84th St. 288-2520. Nov. 16 at 8.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC
During the tenure of music director Robert Spano, the Brooklyn orchestra has tried hard to corral its season's concerts into an overarching theme; this year it's "Liebestod," Wagner's coinage for Love and Death. This concert brings together Schoenberg's "Transfigured Night," a radiant exercise in fin-de-siècle Viennese sensuality, with the dry, Swiss-Protestant severity of Frank Martin's 1943 setting of Rilke's "The Lay of the Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke" (with soprano Monica Groop). (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Nov. 17-18 at 8.)

SCHOENBERG ENSEMBLE
In Mauricio Kagel's music-theatre piece "Kidnapping in the Concert Hall" (co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall), most of an orchestra is held in a small rehearsal room, connected to the conductor by phone: How will the show go on? The Dutch new-music group will also present Kagel's "Midnight Piece," based on the last letters of Schumann. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 18 at 8.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Leon Botstein conducts the ensemble in world premières of Philip Glass's Concerto Fantasy (with the timpanists Jonathan Haas and Svetoslav Stoyanov) and Harold Farberman's Millennium Concerto (with cellist Eugene Moye), along with Krenek's rarely heard Symphony No. 2. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Nov. 19 at 3.)

RECITALS

ENSEMBLE 21
The French composer Jean Barraqué (1928-73) is undoubtedly an acquired taste: his highly intellectual style veers close to that of Pierre Boulez. But he has his champions, not the least of whom is Marilyn Nonken, who tackles the forty-minute Piano Sonata on this all-Barraqué concert; Jeffrey Mi-

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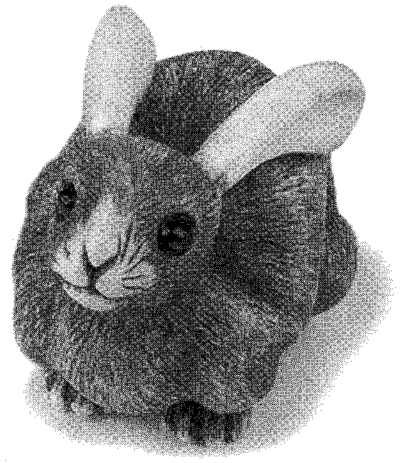

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larsky leads the mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger and the Ensemble in the Nietzsche cycle "Séquence." (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 15 at 8.)

ARCADI VOLODOS
The Russian pianist plays Brahms, Schumann, Schubert, and Liszt. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 15 at 7:30.)

AMERICAN ACCENT
The new group starts its first season with works by John Harbison, George Perle, Ned Rorem, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Judith Lang Zaimont. (Merkin Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Nov. 15 at 8.)

TRIO CROCH
From a brief sampling, these friendly-sounding Danish improvisers (on guitar, percussion, and keyboards) like to mix up a spontaneous collage of music from a crazy quilt of jazz, folk dance, modern atonality, and French movie scores. (Roulette, 228 W. Broadway. 219-8242. Nov. 16 at 8:30.)

ROBERTA PETERS
The American diva, who made her Metropolitan Opera début at age nineteen as Zerlina in "Don Giovanni," celebrates her fiftieth anniversary before the public. Her program includes arias by Mozart, Puccini, and Lehár, accompanied by the pianist Warren Jones; the clarinettist David Shifrin assists. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Nov. 17 at 8.)

MUSIC BEFORE 1800
The Choir of Corpus Christi Church, along with instrumentalists from the faculty of Mannes College of Music, presents a program of Bach: the trio sonata from "The Musical Offering," Cantata 196, and two motets. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-0675. Nov. 19 at. 4.)

DANIEL BARENBOIM
The pianist teams up with colleagues Itzhak Perlman, Maxim Vengerov, Pinchas Zuckerman, Yo-Yo Ma, and Larry Combs, for chamber music by Schumann, Brahms, and Messiaen (the "Quartet for the End of Time"). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 20 at 7:30.)

NEW JUILLIARD ENSEMBLE
Joel Sachs conducts the group in premières of pieces by Americans Walter Blanton, Tellef Johnson, Arthur Levering, and the Indonesian composer Tony Prabowo (his chamber opera "The King's Witch"). (Alice Tully Hall. 769-7406. Nov. 21 at 8. Tickets are free, but reservations are required.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Nov. 15 at 6:30: By the playwright Don Donnellan, from his new drama about the Irish-Americans in Flatbush, Brooklyn, circa 1965. (American Irish Historical Society, 991 Fifth Ave., between 80th and 81st Sts. For reservations, which are required, call 288-2263.) ♦ Nov. 15 at 8: By Ron Padgett, Jim Carroll, Ed Sanders, Alice Notley, John Ashbery, and other poets, from the recently republished edition of Ted Berrigan's 1964 collection, "The Sonnets." (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Nov. 17 at 8: By Ann Marlowe, from her memoir, "How to Stop Time: Heroin from A to Z"; by Lucy Grealy, from her new collection of nonfiction, "As Seen on TV: Provocations"; and by Brett Berk, from his short stories. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 20 at 8: By the actors John Shea and Kate Burton, from the beginning of "The Great Gatsby." **Note:** The balance of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel will be read on Nov. 27 and Dec. 11 by other actors. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

TALKS
Nov. 15 at 6: Victoria Kastner, the author of "Hearst Castle: The Biography of a Country House," discusses the building of William Randolph Hearst's California estate. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.) ♦ Nov. 16 at 8:15: Antonio Damasio, a neurologist and the author of "Descartes' Error," talks about his latest work, "The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

BOOK CURRENTS

The Brain Wants What It Wants

Geniuses make bad boyfriends. The young physics student Mileva Maric learned that the hard way, when she fell for Albert Einstein. In Dennis Overbye's **EINSTEIN IN LOVE** (Viking), Mileva eagerly awaits an early letter from Albert: "I'm burning with desire to work my way into this," he writes, "because I'm hoping it will be possible to make a prodigious step forward in exploring the nature of latent heat." Mileva knows better than to imagine an innuendo in that "latent heat"; more disappointments follow. She becomes pregnant, fails her exams, and returns to her family in Serbia without her degree.

This was the kind of disgrace Friedrich Wieck feared for his daughter Clara, a celebrated pianist, when she became engaged to the composer Robert Schumann. J. D. Landis's novel **LONGING** (Harcourt) reconstructs a court case in which Wieck, who was also Schumann's teacher, tries to protect his daughter from matrimony. "A wife must run the household, even if she is more famous than her husband," he testifies. "But my daughter is an artist. . . . She cannot make the same bed that she is capable of lying in all day long. She cannot bake a fish."

Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin also fell in love with her father's protégé, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Federico Andahazi's gothic novel, **THE MERCIFUL WOMEN** (Grove), imagines the Shelleys in a villa on the shore of Lake Leman, rich with "the sickly smell of absinthe, tobacco and Turkish pot-pourri," as well as the sexual and literary competition that inspired "Frankenstein." In Mary Shelley's famous ghost story, of course, a brilliant male scientist upends nature by creating life. More than a century later, Einstein learned that he had a daughter named Lieserl and dashed off a letter to Mileva: "I would like once to produce a Lieserl myself, it must be so interesting."

—*Nell Freudenberger*

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

Perfect Weekend Companions

GODS & GENERALS

by Jeff Shaara

Inspired by his father Michael Shaara's Pulitzer Prize-winning bestseller *The Killer Angels*, Jeff Shaara has exactingly crafted the perfect companion volume, one that brings to life the events preceding the bloodbath that was Gettysburg. (Ballantine Books)

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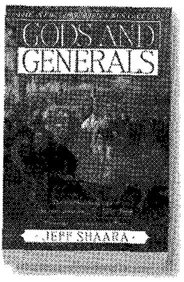

CATCHING ALICE

by Clare Naylor

When her life in London enters a tailspin, Alice packs herself off to the City of Angels. There, she finds herself living the Hollywood life, coddling stars at her new job and puzzling over the attentions of her very own stalker. (Ballantine Books)

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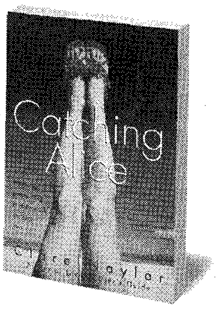

BLUES DANCING

by Diane McKinney-Whetstone

When her first love suddenly re-enters her life, Verdi, the daughter of a Southern preacher, feels her life knocked off balance. Charismatic and irresistible, he was the one who introduced Verdi to romance and heroin—changing her life completely and irrevocably. (HarperPerennial)

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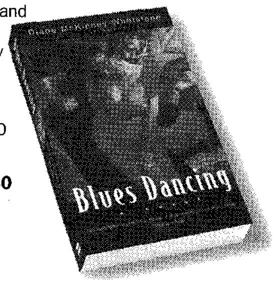

THE NATURAL

by Bernard Malamud

One of the finest baseball novels ever written, the Pulitzer Prize winner's first novel is the story of an athlete of exceptional talent, robbed of a chance in his prime, who gets a second shot at greatness at an age when most players are ready to retire. (HarperPerennial)

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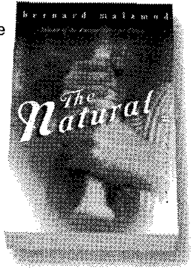

TOKYO SUCKERPUNCH

by Isaac Adamson

Billy Chaka's trip to Tokyo, to cover a martial arts championship and meet an internationally renowned pulp film director, quickly degenerates into a wild wrangle with tattooed Yakuza mobsters and enough over-the-top fist-flying action to make Jackie Chan weep. (HarperPerennial)

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Tokyo Suckerpunch
Isaac Adamson

THE UNBURIED

by Charles Palliser

Elegant and pointed, this update of the Victorian Christmas ghost tradition by the author of *The Quincunx* is an intricate and satisfyingly gothic tale of dark deeds—involving murder, deception, avarice, and evil—that refuse to remain buried in the past. (Washington Square Press)

Pub. Price: $13.95

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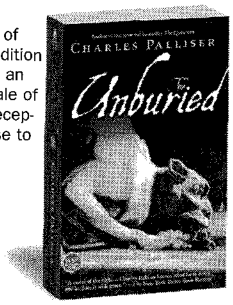

THE TALE OF THE UNKNOWN ISLAND

by José Saramago

A deceptively spare and simple fable in the vein of Swift, Voltaire and Borges, Nobel laureate Saramago's engaging philosophical tale, exquisitely illustrated by Peter Sís, is a poetic allegory about love and the pursuit of dreams. (Harvest Books)

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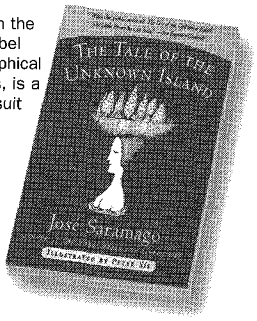

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MOVIES OPENING

BOUNCE
A businessman (Ben Affleck) seeks out the widow (Gwyneth Paltrow) of the man who took his seat on an airplane that crashed, in this romantic drama written and directed by Don Roos ("The Opposite of Sex"). Opening Nov. 17.

LA BÛCHE
A comedy about three sisters, set in Paris during the days before Christmas. Directed by Danièle Thompson. With Emmanuelle Béart, Charlotte Gainsbourg, and Claude Rich. In French. Opening Nov. 17.

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS
Dr. Seuss's classic story adapted for the big screen as a live-action picture, with Jim Carrey as the Grinch. Directed by Ron Howard. Opening Nov. 17.

LIES
The story of a sadomasochistic relationship between a sculptor and a young student, directed by Jang Sun Woo. In Korean. Opening Nov. 17. (The Screening Room.)

ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER
The Oscar-winning documentary about the Palestinian terrorist attack on Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, directed by Kevin Macdonald. Opening Nov. 17. (Film Forum.)

RUGRATS IN PARIS
Stu Pickles goes to France to work on a new amusement park, and the rest of the gang tags along in this second feature film for the popular cartoon series. Opening Nov. 17.

THE 6TH DAY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 17.

WHAT'S COOKING?
A drama that intercuts the stories of four different families of varied backgrounds as they prepare for Thanksgiving dinner. Directed by Gurinder Chadha. Opening Nov. 17.

THE WOLVES OF KROMER
Boy George narrates this dark comedy about homophobia which combines elements of an English murder mystery with the story of two gay werewolves. Directed by Will Gould. Opening Nov. 17.

FILM NOTES

ALMOST FAMOUS
Cameron Crowe's genial but remarkably undramatic account of his life and not very hard times as a fifteen-year-old rock critic in the early nineteen-seventies. Crowe's stand-in, William Miller (Patrick Fugit), leaves home against the wishes of his college-professor mom (Frances McDormand) when he accepts an assignment from *Rolling Stone* to cover a mid-level band called Stillwater. On the road, he falls into an intense admiration of the good-looking lead guitarist (Billy Crudup) and receives gentle treatment from a trio of groupies, the Band-Aids (led by Kate Hudson). Much of the movie plays easily and well as a record of good times, but there's no particular point to it.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/18/00.) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Six-plex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

BAMBOOZLED
In his latest picture, Spike Lee delivers some shattering news: TV is bad for us, and for race relations. Damon Wayans plays Pierre Delacroix—a TV writer who is hired by a network to come up with a fresh idea, and duly delivers a minstrel show, complete with chicken gags and black actors encrusted in blackface. The ratings hit the roof, but Pierre and his colleague (Jada Pinkett-Smith), as well as the energetic stars of the act (Savion Glover and Tommy Davidson), come to feel besmirched by their success, as if they were betraying the black cause. (You can't help thinking that one of them might have noticed that to begin with.) Having started with satirical high jinks, the movie ends in

desperate spasms of subplot, and you keep tripping over the big bump in Lee's conceit: the minstrel show itself is stupendously unamusing.—*Anthony Lane* (10/9/00) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, and Village Theatre VII.)

BEST IN SHOW
Christopher Guest reunites much of the cast of "Waiting for Guffman" for another mock documentary; the target this time around is the cloistered world of championship-dog breeding. Guest directs and scripts with a loose, improvisational style (no dialogue was written down), and while some of the scenes glide along with a quick-witted tempo, others are awkward. The dogs themselves are splendid, and when the satire works the laughs are plentiful. Best-in-group awards go to Parker Posey and Michael Hitchcock as an uptight suburban couple whose courtship involved adjacent Starbucks franchises, John Michael Higgins as a preening owner who outshines his shih tzu, and Fred Willard as a chipper commentator who showers asinine comments on the proceedings. If Guest has a trademark style, it's the airtight earnestness he demands of his cast—there's not one wink in the entire film.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center, Coronet Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

BILLY ELLIOT
The British director Stephen Daldry has previously concentrated on theatre; now, as if to prove that he's a man for all art forms, he's made a film about ballet. Billy Elliot (Jamie Bell) is a slim, pugnacious boy who doesn't enjoy his boxing lessons but casts a jealous glance at the dance class that rehearses nearby. He joins in, prospers, gets some private tuition from his careworn teacher (Julie Walters), and ends up auditioning for the Royal Ballet. Will he make it? Can you guess? Although the film is set during the miners' strike of 1984 (the most grievous strife in Britain's recent history), it slowly sheds its anger and abrasive comedy in favor of something softer. Billy's father (Gary Lewis) stops looking like a human pressure cooker and starts giving the boy encouraging hugs—a development we could do without. The best thing on view is Bell, whose ratty, unsentimental demeanor just about sees the story though. With music by T. Rex, The Jam, and other ethereal favorites of the classical stage.—*A.L.* (10/30/00) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema II, and Lincoln Square.)

BILLY LIAR
Touching, funny, and irritating, John Schlesinger's 1963 film is a portrait of a would-be artist as a weak young man. Tom Courtenay plays Billy, an undertaker's clerk in a city in northern England. Billy talks about becoming a novelist or a scriptwriter, but mostly he devotes himself to leading on two fiancées, lying about his family, and creating an imaginary country named Ambrosia. Courtenay conveys Billy's petty rebelliousness but fails to suggest any quality that would attract the many women in his life. Nonetheless, Schlesinger comes up with a classic snapshot of England as a country in need of youthful renewal, and he has just the actress to embody it in Julie Christie. As Billy's third gal, she's a free spirit who hopes in vain to take him to London. With a forceful stride and a relaxed emotional power in her face, she moves through the streets, swinging her handbag like a wrecking ball.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Nov. 17-21.)

BLAIR WITCH 2: BOOK OF SHADOWS
Rubbishy, incoherent sequel to the hair-raising "documentary" about an encounter with the supernatural in the Maryland woods. A group of thrill seekers go on a tour of the same woods, and then retreat to a warehouse, where you are cooped up with them for an eternity. Directed by Joe Berlinger, a documentary filmmaker; written by Berlinger and Dick Beebe.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, and Village Theatre VII.)

CHARLIE'S ANGELS
It's the usual story: hitch a couple of electrodes to an old TV show, flick the switch, and hope that it comes surging back to life. That plan more or less worked with the first "Mission: Impossible," but adaptations like "Lost in Space" just lay there on the slab. This latest effort can't be faulted for energy, but, in most other respects, it barely gives a twitch. The Angels are played by Lucy Liu, Drew Barrymore, and, most engagingly, Cameron Diaz; they are still controlled by the mysteriously dull Charlie, whose representative on earth is the waggish Bosley (an underused Bill Murray). The plot entails satellites, cell phones, and a threat to "world privacy"—not, one might suppose, a profound cause of anxiety for our flamboyant heroines. The director is someone, or something, called McG, and he, or it, seems content to bundle one high-kicking, high-volume scene on top of the next. You can't hear yourself think, which is probably a good thing.—*A.L.* (11/13/00) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE CONTENDER
Vigorously unsubtle political entertainment. The Democratic President, Jackson Evans (Jeff Bridges), a wily, dominating fellow who may not be good at heart, nominates a woman, Senator Laine Hanson (Joan Allen), to be his Vice-President after the sitting Vice-President dies. A Republican congressman, Shelly Runyon (Gary Oldman), wants to block her. His weapon: some photographs of her participation, as a college freshman, in a frat-house orgy. When the Senator stands on her dignity, refusing to answer Runyon's questions, the movie becomes an attack on double standards—a noble conception but also a needlessly solemn one. The picture is juicily well acted, however, particularly by Oldman. Written and directed by Rod Lurie, who uses Washington unimaginatively, like a TV-movie director.—*D.D.* (10/16 & 10/23/00) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Union Square, and Waverly 1 and 2.)

DANCER IN THE DARK
The new Lars Von Trier film makes his previous efforts seem like models of orthodoxy and restraint. Shot in Sweden, it's set in an America of Von Trier's own devising. Most of the characters speak with foreign accents, and the heroine—a timid, bespectacled factory worker and single mother named Selma—is played by Björk, the Icelandic pop munchkin. Selma has a congenital eye disease, and she is saving up to pay for an operation for her young son, who will otherwise follow her into blindness. The film is unashamedly two-toned, split between a granular authenticity and a stylized gaudiness. The musical scenes—in the factory, on a railroad track—have a deliberate, stamping awkwardness, overlaid with Björk's animal wailing. Many viewers have refused to stomach this unhealthy mixture, yet it feels laced with surprising power, and the harshness of the dénouement is unfeigned.—*A.L.* (9/25/00) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, State, and Union Square.)

DR. T & THE WOMEN
Dressed to the nines in billowing capes, fur chokers, and huge, drooping hats, the upper-crust women

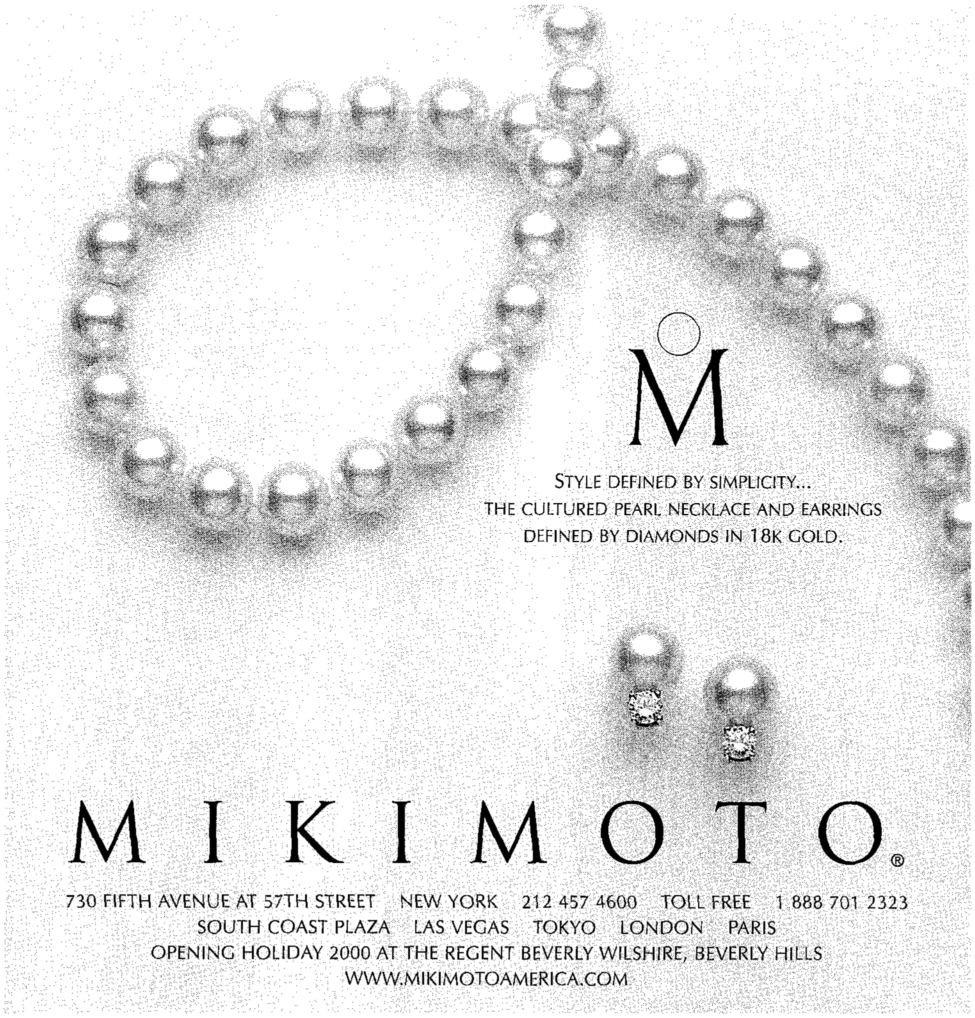
of Dallas rush about the city, drinks in hand, and when they have nothing else to do, which is most of the time, they storm the office of their gynecologist, Dr. T (Richard Gere), a handsome and masterly practitioner who treats them like goddesses. At first, Robert Altman's movie seems to be an amiable, whirligig farce—and a borderline dirty joke—about a man who sugars women, and the women who love him in return, but it develops an odd, apocalyptic tone. There are recurring rainstorms, including a real humdinger at the end, which is supposed to cleanse the fallen city of Dallas. Altman works with his usual fluid camera and his overlapped chattering voices, but there's a sourness bordering on condescension which destroys the pleasures of his skill.—*D.D.* (10/16 & 10/23/00) (Empire 25, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village East Cinemas.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON
David Gordon Green's languid, painterly film about a group of African-American kids growing up in rural North Carolina has all the deliberate, poetic rambling of a Terrence Malick picture. Its "Days of Heaven"-like voice-over, spoken by the thirteen-year-old actress Candace Evanofski, gives the film a haunting, ethereal structure that's far removed from the gritty narratives typically found in stories of poverty and desperation. The script is both evocative and richly detailed, and when the film turns unexpectedly violent the difficulty of bearing truthful witness to the actions of others is movingly, and convincingly, portrayed.—*Bruce Diones* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and The Screening Room.)

THE LEGEND OF BAGGER VANCE
Robert Redford, directing in pastoral-elegy mode: the light is golden, the colors are blended, and drama is nowhere to be found. He's made a tall tale about golf in the early thirties, with Matt Damon as a Savannah athlete demoralized by the First World War and Will Smith as an angelic black caddie who emerges from the gloaming and restores Damon by whispering incomprehensible remarks in his ear about feeling his way to an "authentic stroke." With Charlize Theron around, Damon shouldn't have any trouble restoring himself through love, but the movie is too dreamy and silly for sex. Again and again, the camera takes the point of view of a golf ball on simulated flights through the air. The ball lands with a thunk—and so does the movie.—*D.D.* (11/6/00) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

THE LEGEND OF DRUNKEN MASTER
Jackie Chan in mint condition, fighting off an axe gang with a wooden bench in each hand. Colonial China as a place where even friends greet each other with a bit of fist play. These are the hallmarks of a classic kung-fu film. What surprises are the finely wrought scenes of Chinese daily life (the market, the train, the school courtyard) and the sprightly comic performance of Anita Mui as a mah-jongg-obsessed wife. Chan made this film in 1994 as an homage to "Drunken Master," the 1979 film that turned him into a star, and its final twenty-minute fight scene inside a steel mill is considered one of the genre's high-water marks. For this rerelease, the dialogue has been dubbed into English, and the mismatched mouths take you back to the Saturday-afternoon double features of days gone by.—*M.A.* (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

MEET THE PARENTS
Jay Roach moves on from the campy delights of the Austin Powers series to direct this smoothly acted comedy of errors. Ben Stiller plays a modern man charged with a Victorian task: asking his girlfriend's father for permission to marry his daughter. With a calamitous surname ("pronounced just like it's spelled, F-O-C-K-E-R") and a faintly hilarious profession (male nurse), Stiller seems like a sitting duck for the secretive, overprotective father, played by Robert De Niro. Stiller grovels, De Niro growls, and the girls (Blythe Danner and Teri Polo) watch from the sidelines. This is dumbed-up comedy: there are just enough unexpected moments to redeem all the easy pleasures of the slapstick.—*M.A.* (Battery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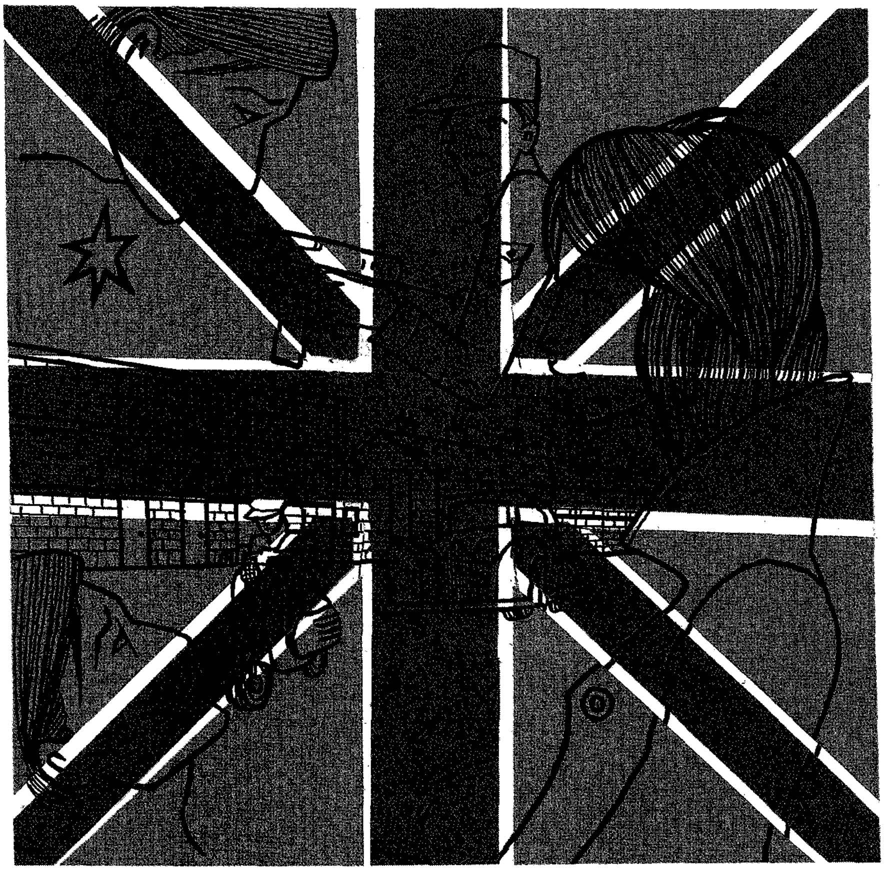
MEN OF HONOR
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea West, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

PAY IT FORWARD
An embarrassingly ham-handed fable about doing good deeds, but worth seeing for Helen Hunt's first-rate performance as an alcoholic Las Vegas cocktail waitress and single mother—a woman with lousy judgment who wants to do the right thing but doesn't know how. As a classroom exercise, her son Trevor (Haley Joel Osment) devises the scheme of "pay it forward"—performing a gratuitous act of kindness for three people and then insisting that they do the same for three others. Trevor helps strangers, but, playing Cupid, he's more eager to help his mother meet his teacher (Kevin Spacey). It's a rum role for Spacey, who sacrifices his aura of malevolence by delivering an unconvincing, weepy confession fit for a TV movie. Written by Leslie Dixon, from Catherine Ryan Hyde's novel, and directed by Mimi Leder.—*D.D.* (11/6/00) (Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)



At Film Forum, a new print of John Schlesinger's 1963 film, "Billy Liar."

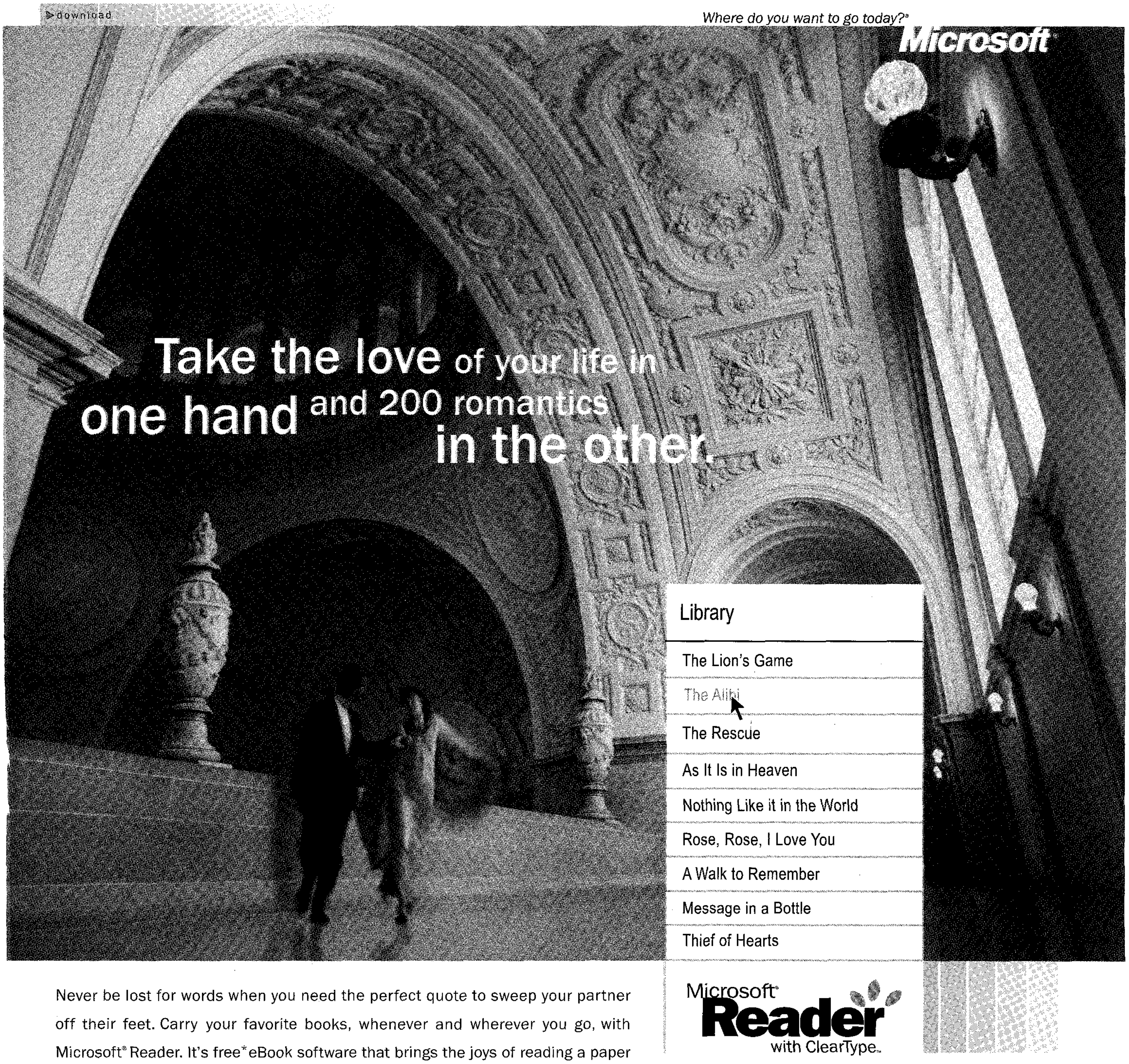
HIROSHI TANABE

RATCATCHER
There are no cheap epiphanies in this interior, melancholy portrait of a boy growing up in a Glasgow housing project. The director Lynne Ramsay discovered William Eadie, an untrained actor, and she evokes a complete emotional consciousness from his open, enigmatic face. Her camera hews so closely to his world view that you become fully immersed in his sadness. The inexplicable tragedy that opens the film remains just that, and this lack of closure resonates long after the end credits.—*M.A.* (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

REQUIEM FOR A DREAM
Darren Aronofsky's new film stars Ellen Burstyn as Sara Goldfarb, a Brighton Beach widow who launches herself on a crash diet—a path that will lead to pill addiction and electroshock therapy. Meanwhile, her son Harry (Jared Leto) and his girlfriend, Marion (Jennifer Connelly), yield to the pull of hard drugs. Aronofsky divides them by split screen, and punches home their addiction with a blistering montage of pills, puffs, and dilating eyes. All this is managed with formidable skill, but it shuts the movie down, and the various junkies—even Burstyn, who gives the role everything she's got—end up looking less substantial than their respective poisons. The script was adapted from the novel by Hubert Selby, Jr., who appears as a ferrety prison guard.—*A.L.* (10/9/00) (Union Square.)

A TIME FOR DRUNKEN HORSES
The Northern Iran winters are so cold that the Kurdish smugglers who live there feed their mules alcohol so that they will carry loads over the mountain passes. In this world of high-risk border crossings and death by land mine, a fatherless young boy named Ayoub scrapes out a living doing odd tasks, supporting his sisters and crippled brother. This may seem like a recipe for seventy-seven minutes of misery, but the director Bahman Ghobadi's affection for his subjects gives the film a certain lightness. He takes the raw materials of his homeland—the harsh landscape, communal rooms, and lambent-eyed children—and fashions a visual poem. Ghobadi documents all this without intruding, and the results are quietly enthralling. In Kurdish.—*M.A.* (State.)

VENUS BEAUTY INSTITUTE
A melancholy portrait of a perversely lonely Parisian single woman (Nathalie Baye) who picks up men at will but revolts when a raffishly handsome sculptor (Samuel Le Bihan) falls in love with her. Filmed in the luscious, synthetic blue-and-pink hues of the beauty parlor in which the heroine works, the picture offers a nonjudgmental view of women's obsessions with aging and beauty, and of sexual temperaments in all their variety. Unfortunately, it loses drive and focus near the end and slips away—it's half of a very good movie. Bulle Ogier plays the proprietor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of the beauty shop; Tonie Marshall wrote and directed.—*D.D.* (59th Street East Cinema and Quad Cinema.)

THE YARDS
A lowering, heavy-browed thriller from the director James Gray, who made a name for himself with "Little Odessa." In many ways, this is more of the same: a tight and sometimes tortured community, the sober settling of scores, and what feels like an official rationing of daylight. Mark Wahlberg plays Leo, who's trying to go straight; he takes a job as sidekick to his old friend Willie (Joaquin Phoenix), who fixes contracts for the New York subway system. Things go well, then badly, then worse still, until Leo is dwelling in subterranean solitude—Gray's kind of place. The supporting cast is tough and tested: Faye Dunaway, Ellen Burstyn, and especially James Caan, who plays Leo's uncle by marriage. The film may be humorless, unflustered by the need to quicken or amuse, but it feels unfashionably true to itself. Gray has reconstructed a world that he knows, and conjured a mood that no one else would have the nerve to maintain. For good measure, he also stages a great street fight. With Charlize Theron as Willie's despairing girl.—*A.L.* (10/30/00) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Square.)

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME
The polished actress Laura Linney—bland on the surface but with angry impulses churning underneath—gives a detailed and involving performance as a single working mother in a small and somewhat boring upstate New York town. When her screwup of a kid brother (Mark Ruffalo) returns from Alaska, she's torn between tossing him out and letting him stay on and become a companion to her fatherless son (Rory Culkin). The movie was written and directed by the playwright and screenwriter Kenneth Lonergan, who pays close attention to the way so many of us are divided between good and bad impulses—the kind we desperately need to act on if we're not going to feel half-dead. Lonergan's work is quiet but intense, and Ruffalo—dark and sensual and agonizingly confused—gives a heartbreaking performance. With Matthew Broderick and Jon Tenney as Linney's suitors.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

ANIMAL FACTORY
Cinema Village.

BEDAZZLED
Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Olympia I and II, and Union Square.

BOESMAN AND LENA
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

THE BRIDGE
Paris.

CALLE 54
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

KIPPUR
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

LITTLE NICKY
Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, and Orpheum VII.

LOOKING FOR AN ECHO
BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village East Cinemas.

ME & ISAAC NEWTON
Cinema Village.

NON-STOP
State.

RED PLANET
Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, and Orpheum VII.

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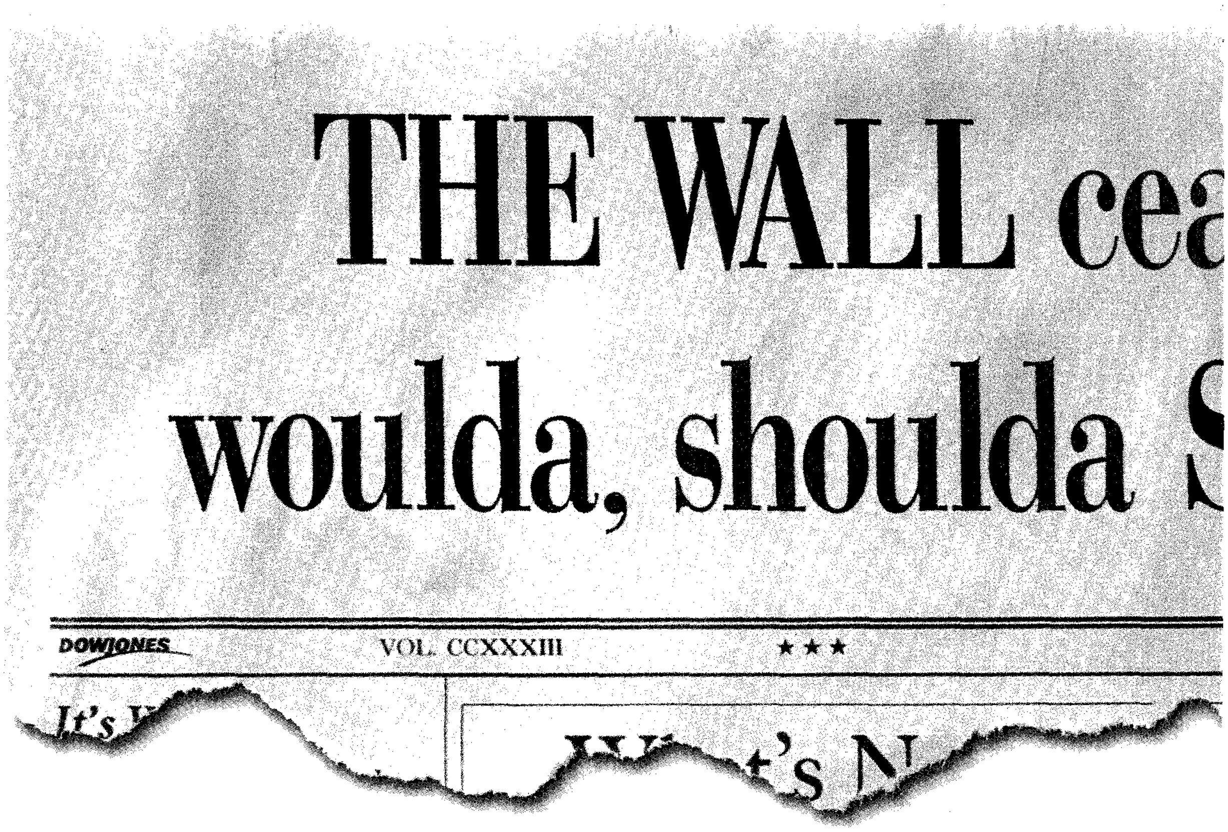
THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.



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Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Dec. 3: "Visions of New York: Films from the 1960's Underground." Nov. 18 at 2: "Baud'larian Capers" (1963, Ken Jacobs) and "The Sky Socialist" (1964, Jacobs). ♦ Nov. 18 at 4:45: Five short films by Jacobs. ♦ Nov. 19 at 2: Rarities from the Filmmakers' Cooperative. ♦ Nov. 19 at 4: "Still" (1969, Ernie Gehr). ♦ Classic movies. Nov. 18-19 at 6:30: "The Conformist" (1971, Bernardo Bertolucci).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Nov. 15 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Guilt by Association" (1999, Kevin Roberts). ♦ Nov. 16 at 6:50 and 9:10: Shorts and animations from the N.Y. Expo festival. ♦ A survey of Czech cinema. All films are in Czech. Nov. 17 at 7:30: "Erotikon" (1929, Gustav Machaty). ♦ Nov. 18 at 2 and 6:50: "Ecstasy" (1932, Machaty). ♦ Nov. 18 at 4:30 and 9:10: "From Saturday to Sunday" (1931, Machaty). ♦ Nov. 19 at 2 and 7:20: "Daisies" (1966, Vera Chytilová). ♦ Nov. 19 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Pearls of the Deep" (1964, Jiri Menzel). ♦ An Alain Resnais retrospective. All films are in French. Nov. 20 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Hiroshima, Mon Amour" (1959). ♦ Nov. 21 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Providence" (1977).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Nov. 30: "The British New Wave: From Angry Young Men to Swinging London." Nov. 15 at 3, 6:35, and 10:10: "The Knack, and How to Get It" (1965, Richard Lester). ♦ Nov. 15 at 1, 4:35, and 8:10: "Only Two Can Play" (1962, Sidney Gilliat). ♦ Nov. 16 at 2:40, 6:20, and 10: Short films by Lindsay Anderson. ♦ Nov. 17 at 1, 4:35, and 8:20: "Free Cinema" shorts. ♦ Nov. 17-21 at 1:30, 3:40, 5:50, 7:50, and 9:50: "Billy Liar" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Nov. 16 at 3: "Summer at Grandpa's" (1985, Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Hokkien, Taiwanese, and Mandarin). ♦ Nov. 17 at 8: "Pixote" (1981, Hector Babenco; in Portuguese). ♦ Through Jan. 2: A Luis Buñuel centennial retrospective. Nov. 17 at 8: "Der Müde Tod" (1921, Fritz Lang). ♦ Nov. 18 at 2 and Nov. 20 at 3: "Mauprat" (1926, Jean Epstein). ♦ Nov. 18 at 5 and Nov. 20 at 2:30: "Regarding Buñuel" (2000, Javier Rioyo and José Luis López-Linares; in Spanish). ♦ Nov. 19 at 2 and Nov. 21 at 6: "Un Chien Andalou" (1929, Buñuel) and "L'Age D'or" (1930, Buñuel; in French). ♦ Nov. 19 at 5: "Siren of the Tropics" (1927, Henri Etiévant and Mario Nalpas) and "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1928, Epstein).

THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—Classic Hong Kong action films. Nov. 17-18 at midnight: "Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain" (1983, Tsui Hark; in Cantonese). ♦ Nov. 18-19 at 1: "South" (1919, Frank Hurley).

SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Through Nov. 28: "Empires of Passion: The Cinema of Obsession." Nov. 21 at 7: "Moby Dick" (1956, John Huston). ♦ Nov. 21 at 9:15: "The Searchers" (1956, John Ford).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Nov. 30: "Soviet Cinema of the Sixties and Seventies." Unless otherwise noted, all films are in Russian. Nov. 15 at 1, 5, and 9: "The Letter Never Sent" (1959, Mikhail Kalatozov). ♦ Nov. 15 at 3 and 7: "The Cranes are Flying" (1957, Kalatozov). ♦ Nov. 16 at 1 and 9 and Nov. 18 at 4: "Nine Days of One Year" (1961, Mikhail Romm). ♦ Nov. 16 at 3:15 and Nov. 18 at 8:15: "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" (1964, Sergei Paradjanov). ♦ Nov. 17 at 1, 5, and 9: "There was a Lad" (1964, Vasily Shukshin). ♦ Nov. 17 at 3 and 7 and Nov. 18 at 6:15: "Ivan's Childhood" (1962, Andrei Tarkovsky). ♦ Nov. 19 at 4 and Nov. 20 at 1 and 5:15: "A Long and Happy Life" (1963, Gennady Shpalikov). ♦ Nov. 19 at 6 and Nov. 20 at 3: "Nobody Wanted to Die" (1963, Vitautas Zalakiavicius and Lietuvos Kinostudija). ♦ Nov. 19 at 8:15: "Hamlet" (1964, Grigory Kozintsev). ♦ Nov. 21 at 1: "The First Teacher" (1965, Andrei Konchalovsky). ♦ Nov. 21 at 3: "July Rain" (1966, Marlen Khutsiev).

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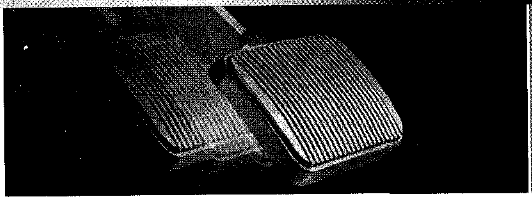

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN
ELECTION SPECIAL

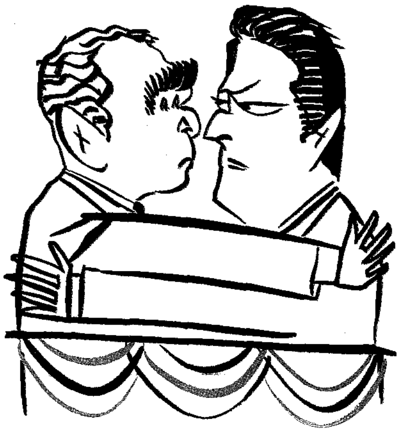
COMMENT
WINNERS AND LOSERS

Sometime after 3 A.M. on November 8, 2000, America's most authoritative television-news personalities began to gasp and stammer, and then fell silent, as they listened intently to the embarrassing instructions whispered into their earpieces: the state of Florida, prematurely ceded to Al Gore earlier in the evening, then retracted from his column, and then, at 2 A.M., bestowed—along with the Presidency of the United States—upon George W. Bush, would have to be retracted again. Florida's color (Republican red) was drained from the electoral map; the state drooped opaque and forlorn from the southeast coast of America. The commentators, twice wrong, were dumbstruck and humiliated. They were not alone in their ignominy for long.

Within days, the most serious ritual of American democracy had been transformed into a sadly familiar spectacle, the electoral version of the O. J. Simpson trial, the Elián González dispute, the Monica Lewinsky scandal—a potentially interminable soap opera, in which all the major players will inevitably lose stature and the next President's ability to govern could be seriously compromised. Soon, Jesse Jackson was fulminating on the streets of south Florida; campaign spokespeople like Chris Lehane and Karen Hughes were back and spinning, as if votes were still at stake; partisan political operatives were encouraging the candidates, particularly Al Gore, to play long-shot legal games at the expense of the nation's stability; and the usual teleblatherers were exploiting every possible avenue of dispute. The gaseous, litigious, hyper-partisan atmosphere that had corrupted public life during the Clinton era wasn't over—it had metastasized.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

The mess will be cleared away before long, one hopes; these public viruses have limited staying power. But the election's most important political lesson has been obscured, and may be lost, in the process: the need for humble and conciliatory leadership at a moment of clearly defined, if not philosophically profound, national division. The actual results of the voting had been strangely exhilarating and perverse: ninety-eight million individual decisions—some vehement, most reluctant, a small number puckishly insidious—which rendered an almost perfectly divided populace. The only practical political conclusion for the next President is that reluctance has neutered vehemence. Indeed, vehemence of any sort—ideological, political, analytical—seems ill-advised.



George W. Bush and Al Gore

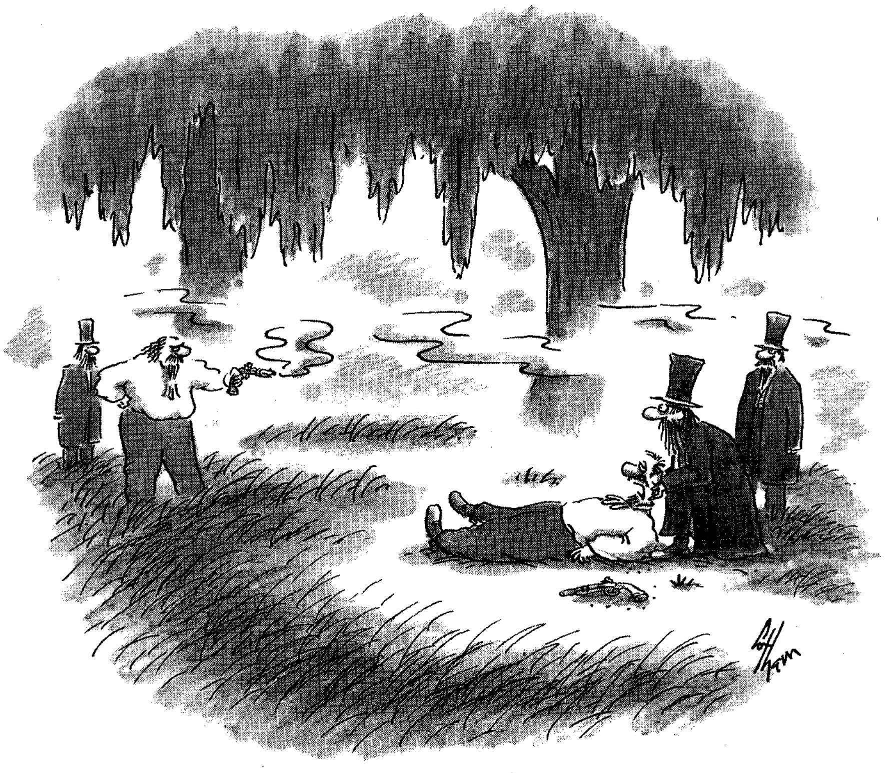
No matter the eventual outcome, the next President will struggle to establish his political authority. Given the circumstances, there is only one possible governing strategy: a quiet, patient, and persistent bipartisanship. This means that almost all the extravagant promises made during the campaign just ended are now officially inoperative. There will be no $1.3 trillion tax cut, nor will there be a vast prescription-drug entitlement for senior citizens, as the Vice-President proposed, unless it is accompanied by Medicare reform. There will be no extreme Supreme Court nominees, either. The new Congress is divided so evenly that the passage of any legislation will require support from members of both parties. The winning coalition is likely to shift with each vote, but each coalition will be built from the center out. Building and rebuilding these coalitions will be a daunting political task, but also a potentially liberating one—political necessity will force the next President to extricate himself, on occasion, from the influence of his party's traditional interests. The bullies and extremists who have populated the congressional leadership of both parties—not just conservative ideologues, like Tom DeLay, of Texas, but also obdurate liberals, like David Bonior, of Michigan—could find themselves abandoned by moderate backbenchers more willing to compromise. (Democrats like Calvin Dooley, of California, and Republicans like Christopher Shays, of Connecticut, may emerge as leaders of the rational center.)

George Bush might seem better suited to this new political landscape than Al Gore. Bush worked successfully with Democrats in Texas; he insisted throughout the campaign that he intended to do the same in Washington. Gore ran a more divisive campaign and then reinforced his partisan reputation by challenging the results in Florida; if he does win the Presidency, his ability to govern will have been severely compromised. But Gore has shown signs that he understands the next President's dilemma. Just before the election, he distributed to members of his policy staff an article by Ronald Brownstein, of the Los Angeles *Times*, about the perils of trying to govern after winning the election and losing the popular vote (a scenario that seemed possible at the time). Gore's staff began thinking about specific programs—like Medicare reform—that might attract moderate Republicans into a bipartisan coalition. Bush will have similar opportunities, if he chooses to pursue them; for example, if he moved quickly to support a popular staple of the Democrats' wish list—a "bill of rights" for H.M.O. patients, including the modified right to sue, would be an obvious, relatively painless concession—he might create the momentum and trust that would later enable him to negotiate more complicated pieces of business (a budget, for example) through Congress.

In 1960, John Kennedy, after a very narrow electoral and popular-vote victory, acknowledged his tenuous mandate by creating, in effect, a government of national reconciliation. His Defense Secretary, Robert McNamara; his Treasury Secretary, C. Douglas Dillon; and his national-security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, were all Republicans. His Secretary of Defense, Dean Rusk, was a career diplomat perceived as apolitical. After winning less than fifty per cent of the vote in 1968, Richard Nixon brought in Democrats—Daniel Patrick Moynihan and John Connally, among others—to run a very successful domestic-policy operation. Bill Clinton, who probably should have followed this lesson earlier, eventually found that the appointment of a Republican, William Cohen, as Defense Secretary was a valuable political buffer when he bombed Kosovo and Iraq. It seems obvious that the next President would be wise to follow a similar strategy. Al Gore could do worse than invite people like Colin Powell or Elizabeth Dole or the former Republican senator Warren Rudman to join him. Bush could easily retain Lawrence Summers at Treasury and Richard Holbrooke at the United Nations, and tap the former Democratic senator Sam Nunn as his Secretary of Defense.

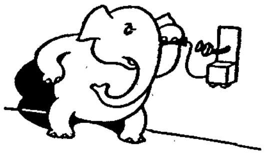
Indeed, there are all sorts of creative possibilities for an enterprising pragmatist. Unfortunately, neither of our potential leaders demonstrated much enterprise over the course of the campaign; neither could be accused of deftness, spontaneity, or a willingness to take risks. And each is faced with the challenge of surviving a dreary and brutal partisan electoral struggle. Each day the struggle continues, the likelihood of a successful Presidency diminishes, but success remains a possibility, particularly for a politician who is humble and gracious, nimble and fearless—that is, a politician who understands that the public's greatest desire is to be liberated from the witless vehemence that engulfed the Clinton years and which now threatens even more serious damage to our public life.

—*Joe Klein*



"He didn't have to get snippy about it!"

DEPT. OF CLOSE CALLS
GEORGE W.'S COUSIN



"Jebbie'll be calling me like eight thousand times a day," John Ellis said. It was the morning after the morning after Election Night, and Ellis, the forty-seven-year-old first cousin of Jeb and George W. Bush, who heads up the Fox News Channel election-decision team, was padding through his big house in Irvington, New York, in gym socks, khakis, and a baggy navy sweatshirt. He looked exhausted but cautiously exhilarated, despite one cousin's shrinking Florida lead and the other's incessant phone calls. "I'm not worried," Ellis said. "Not yet, anyway."

He hadn't always felt so confident about his cousin's prospects. Ellis said that at the start of the election season he considered the race "unlosable" for Vice-President Al Gore. "I kept wondering," he said, "why, during the debates, Gore didn't just turn to Bush and ask, 'What, exactly, is it about peace and

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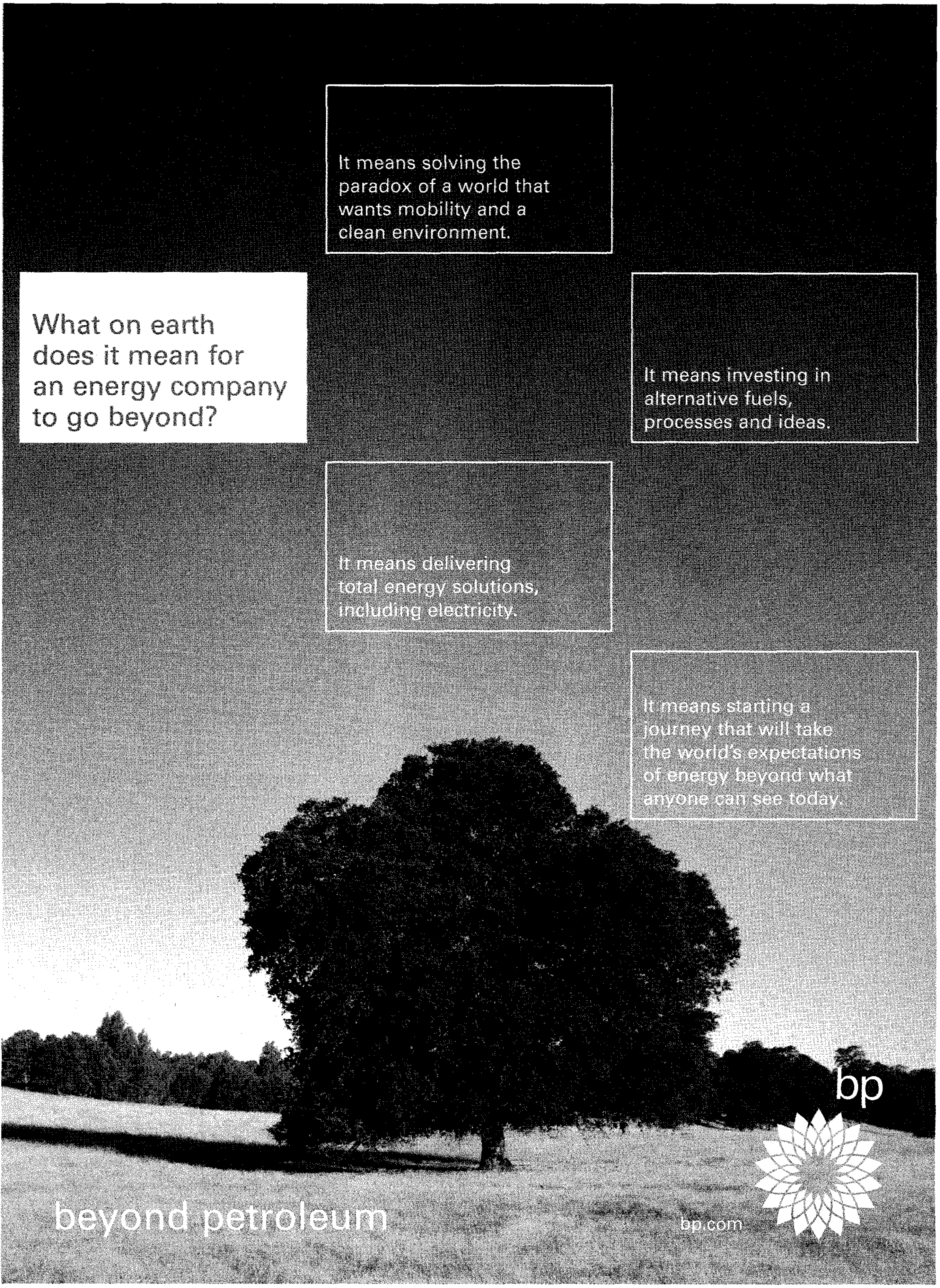

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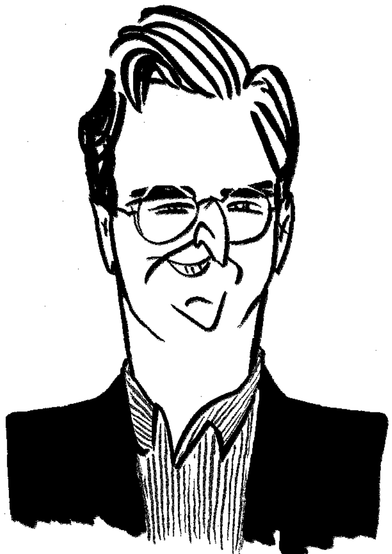
prosperity that you don't like?' " And in 1998 Ellis was quoted as saying that George W. at the age of forty was "on the road to nowhere." Now, however, Ellis believes that his cousin will be the next President. And he doesn't think that the Democrats will risk pushing for a revote in West Palm Beach. Any attempt to do so, he warned, could lead to the electoral version of mutually assured destruction. "I just can't imagine that they want to go there," he said, a bit ominously.



John Ellis

Ellis, whose mother, Nancy Ellis, is the sister of former President George Bush, had spent Election Night perched in front of a bank of computer monitors in Fox's midtown headquarters. It was his responsibility to tell the network's anchors when they could safely project the outcome in each state. He also stayed in constant touch with his cousins in Austin, relaying early vote counts as they showed up on his screens.

As the afternoon wore on, things weren't looking good for George W. Bush. At about 6 P.M., after two waves of exit polls, Fox News's chairman, Roger Ailes, called Ellis into his office for a private briefing. "What's your gut say?" Ailes asked him. Silently, Ellis slid his index finger across his throat.

Soon afterward, Ellis received a telephone call from the Bush brothers. "They were, like, 'How we doin'?' " Ellis recalled. "I had to tell them it didn't look good." The brothers were gloomy. "I think the reality is that George thought he'd win it, and not in a nail-biter," Ellis said. In the next hour, it got worse. "We had a South that was not delivering Bush his margin," Ellis said. "Dominoes usually fall only one way on Election Night, and so at one point I looked at the others in the newsroom and said, 'We're building a Gore electoral victory.' "

Like any other newsman, Ellis wanted to get the story first, even if it spelled doom for his own family's campaign. By 7:52 P.M., Fox had joined the other networks in predicting that Gore would win Florida. Jeb called Ellis and asked, in an edgy voice, "Are you sure?" Ellis told him, "We're looking at a screen full of Gore."

But then Ellis's computer, displaying data from the Voter News Service, started countermanding the Gore win. "The computer goes into this status called REV"—shorthand for reversal. Before long, Florida was leaning heavily toward Bush. At 2 A.M., Ellis called his cousins and told them, "Our projection shows that it is statistically impossible for Gore to win Florida." They were elated. "Their mood was up, big time," Ellis recalled. "It was just the three of us guys handing the phone back and forth—me with the numbers, one of them a governor, the other the President-elect. Now, *that* was cool."

Brit Hume, the Fox News anchor, went on the air and declared Bush the next President. "Everyone followed us," Ellis said. An hour later, Ellis got another message on his computer: the V.N.S. numbers, apparently, were wrong. Ellis called his cousins again. "You gotta be kidding me," George W. Bush said. And for the second time that night "we had to pull it back," Ellis said sadly. "And that, my dear, is where we sit."

—*Jane Mayer*

THE BALLOT BOX

YENTAGATE

What kind of week was it? It was the kind of week when the free world contemplated the interesting possibility that the identity of its maximum leader would be determined by the fact that a couple of thousand sweet little old Jewish ladies in West Palm Beach retirement communities accidentally voted for a Holocaust denier. O.K., that's an exaggeration. They probably weren't all sweet, they probably weren't all little, they probably weren't all old, they probably weren't all Jewish, they probably weren't all ladies, and the fellow they accidentally voted for probably isn't a Holocaust denier, although it must be said that neither is he a prominent member of Israel's amen corner. Still—is this a great country or what?

Actually, Pat Buchanan—in a mellow mood after blowing twelve million taxpayer dollars on the Reform Party farewell tour—modestly allowed that even he had to question his eerie popularity in the sunny land of the blue-haired bubelehs. And no wonder, given that Pitchfork Pat's vote total in Palm Beach County (3,407) was 1,600 per cent of his average (211) in the state's sixty-six other counties, 340 per cent of his total (1,010) in his second-highest county (Pinellas, where golf carts are not the usual mode of transportation), and 250 per cent of his total (1,350) in the state's two biggest counties, Broward and Dade, whose combined population is more than triple Palm Beach's.

It was also the kind of week when the candidate of the Socialist Party, David McReynolds, got more ink than he had seen in the entire campaign—all of it in the form of pictures of the notorious Palm Beach ballot paper, on which his punch hole and Buchanan's punch hole sandwich the punch hole ambiguously reserved for the Gore-Lieberman ticket. McReynolds, interestingly, cleaned up in Palm Beach. His tally there—302 votes, according to the thirty-seventh paragraph of the lead story in Thursday's Palm Beach *Post*—handily outstripped not only his own total in the entire rest of the state (233, according to the same paragraph) but also George W. Bush's statewide lead (which stood, as of that day, at 229).

McReynolds—a tall, slender, and dignified man of seventy-one, with a neatly trimmed beard and a calm, resonant voice—is one of the country's great, if largely unheralded, apostles of nonviolence, having devoted most of his life to working for the War Resisters League. Reached last Thursday evening at his apartment in the East Village, he staunchly maintained that, while some of his votes, like Buchanan's, might have been intended for Gore, his Palm Beach showing wasn't all that out of line. "We have around twenty active members in Palm Beach, out of a national Socialist Party membership of just over a thousand," he said. "A good radical activist can mobilize a lot of people. Our statewide total will be bigger than what's been reported so far. It takes weeks for minor-party votes to be counted, if they ever are. Those guys, Bush and Gore, are just getting a taste of what we go through as a matter of course. Still, I feel a little sorry for them."

It was the kind of week when the Republican Party suddenly discovered the awful dangers posed by protracted investigations and drawn-out legal proceedings. After all, it's not as if what is at stake in Palm Beach were something truly worth getting to the bottom of, something worth disrupting the orderly processes of governance over, something worth trying to reverse the apparent outcome of a Presidential election—something like, say, the finances of the Whitewater Development Company. And the punditocracy seems to agree: those little old disfranchised ladies in West Palm should do the patriotic thing. They should look at the bigger picture. They should forgo their day in court. Who do they think they are? Paula Jones?

It was also the kind of week when the Founding Fathers were taking some unaccustomed heat. The Electoral College was their brainstorm, and grumblings began to be heard that the curriculum might be getting a little outdated. On the other hand, one thing the framers did have the foresight to build into our ramshackle system was time. Election Day is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November; six long weeks later, the Electors gather in their respective state capitals to cast their electoral votes (this year, it'll be on December 18th); three weeks after that, the House of Representatives convenes in Washington to count the Electors' ballots; and, finally, two weeks after that, just a week shy of February (before 1937, in March), the new President is inaugurated. This leisurely timetable was designed to accommodate the vicissitudes of equine travel on unpaved, rutted roads up and down the East Coast. How nice for all of us that it is also ideally suited to the scheduling requirements of the twenty-first-century equivalent of the horse and carriage: the modern American lawsuit.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

"GOVERNOR, IT'S THE VICE-PRESIDENT CALLING BACK"

"George, it's Al again. I want you to know that I feel extremely awkward about this."

"No need to apologize, Al."

"Thank you. I know you'll appreciate that this isn't easy for me."

"Aw, hell, we all say things in the heat of campaigns. Listen, we're workin' on my victory statement here. Can I try it out on you?"

"Actually, George, I was calling about—"

"Lemme have a Diet Coke. Victory sure puts a thirst on you, I tell you. Times like this, I wish I hadn't given up the sauce. Anyway, you were sayin'?"

"There have been some, well, there have been some developments, George."

"What kind of 'developments' we talkin' about, Al?"

"Well, as it turns out, you're not fifty thousand votes ahead after all."

"Um-hum. Well, what's the problemo? Still gonna win this thing."

"That may in fact turn out to *be* the case. However, if you set *aside* the votes cast by the wealthiest one per cent of Palm Beach voters . . ."

"Al, boy, listen to me, you been up for fifty hours. You need to get some sleep."

". . . and factor *in* the number of likely absentee ballots cast by Jewish voters currently residing *in* Israel, which, of course, I have supported throughout my twenty-four years of public service, then the aggregate picture that is *likely* to emerge from the data . . ."

"Where we goin' with this, Al?"

"Well, George, after consulting with the top people *within* the Gore organization, who themselves are in contact with the relevant officials *in* the state of Florida, we feel that a concession, at this point, would be, well, premature."

"Y'*already* conceded, Al. In fact, you were pretty decent about it. I was even fixin' to mention it in my victory statement."

"Well, I appreciate that, George, but the fact remains that the situation is more, well, *fluid* than before."

"Let me make sure I understand. You're calling me back to *retract* your concession?"

"Those are *your* words, George. Not mine. What I'm *hoping* to accomplish in *this* conversation is to build on our previous conversation, with a view to—"

"Hold on a second. . . . I just asked Karl here, and he says you can't take back a concession. It's unprecedented. Was that a sigh, or you breakin' wind?"

"You know, George, I was *hoping* to keep this conversation on a higher plane. I should explain that by 'plane' I don't mean an airplane, which of course is a fixed-wing—"

"You wanna hear a sound? I'm holdin' the phone out the window. That's the sound of my supporters, Al. They been standin' out there in the wet for hours. They're tired, cold, and hungry, and they probably have to use the facilities. You want me to tell them, 'Hold everything—Vice-President No Controlling Legal Authority just called to retract his concession, so you're all just going to have to hold it in until he decides he's whupped'?"

"What about my people? Don't you think that they, too, need to use the facilities? Going to the bathroom is not a *Republican* issue or a Democratic issue. It's an American issue, and—"

"Jebbie here says you're toast, Al. The fat lady has sung. End of the line. Sayonara City. That's all she wrote."

"Let me *explain* something. Your *younger* brother is not the ultimate authority on this."

"Take out this part about him bein' magnamino—here, page 2."

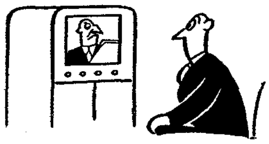
"I beg your pardon?"

"Wasn't talkin' to you, Al. I'm talkin' to my speechwriter."

"You don't have to be snippy about it."

—*Christopher Buckley*

ON TELEVISION
ANCHORS ASTRAY



Certitude, Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, is not the test of certainty. On Election Night, the Bush campaign announced that the President-elect would be delivering a victory speech to supporters outside the Texas Capitol, in Austin, from 11:39 to 11:51 P.M. Central time. From 11:51 P.M. to 12:06 A.M., he was scheduled to wave. As events unfolded, of course, the whole performance had to be postponed. It was a bad night for confidence.

There is no such thing as the true height of a newborn baby, and the same principle applies to election returns. Whenever you try to measure anything with exactitude, in fact—not just a very large or very small or very squirmy thing but even your sofa—you get a slightly different result each time. What people call "an accurate count" is just a name for the point at which they have decided to stop counting. No one should know this better than all those TV network anchors who kept announcing, in voices trained to resonate with confidence, results they kept having to retract.

Twice the cocks crowed, and twice the sun failed to rise. NBC declared Al Gore the winner in Florida at 7:49 P.M. Tuesday, and by 8 P.M all the other networks had joined the chorus. By ten o'clock, they had changed their collective mind, and at 2:16 A.M. Wednesday Brit Hume, on Fox, declared Bush the next President of the United States. Within four minutes, it was unanimous. On CBS, Lesley Stahl began explaining why Americans preferred Bush—even as the popular vote, which would show that Americans actually preferred Gore, was still coming in. ("He presented a picture of optimism," she explained, "and American voters like that. We voted for Reagan for the same reason." *We*, kemo sabe?) "What a sweet moment it must be for the man they call Poppy," reflected Tom Brokaw, on NBC.

It is always mildly depressing to watch the network anchors announce a new President. They cannot help being condescending: leaders of the free world, after all, come and go, but Dan and Peter and Tom are with us always. Never having been voted into office, they can never be voted out. No one elected them, no one appointed them, no one even *asked* them to declare the winners of Presidential elections. Yet there they are, every four years, graciously welcoming a politician to a temporary seat among the media gods.

This year, Dan Rather, primed by a reported twenty-one cups of coffee consumed over the course of a very long night, offered the most inspired salute. "Before the trail goes completely cold, let's give a tip of the Stetson to the loser, Vice-President Al Gore," he said after declaring Bush the winner (the trail goes cold very fast for also-rans up on Mt. Olympus), "and at the same time a big tip and a hip-hip-hooray and a big Texas howdy to the new President of the United States. Sip it, savor it, cup it, photostat it, underline it in red, press it in a book, put it in an album, hang it on the wall: George W. Bush is the next President of the United States." By 4 A.M., he had taken it all back. It is to be hoped that not too many Americans had gone to the trouble of photostatting it.

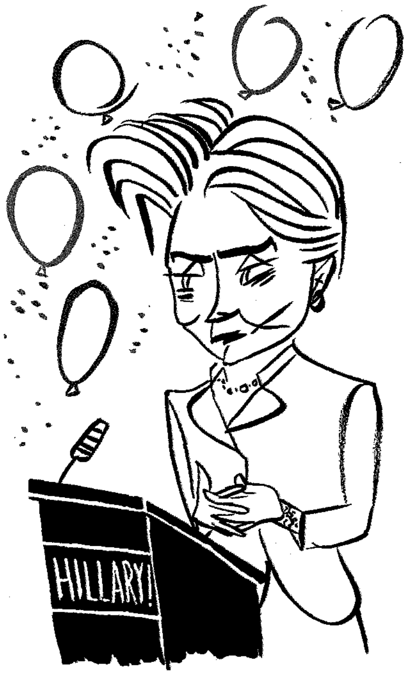
It was therefore hard not to take satisfaction in the networks' spectacularly botched coverage of a race that was, as Rather himself put it, "hot and tight as a too small bathing suit on a too long car ride back from the beach." (Do not think for too long about that image.) At least the networks managed to satisfy equal-time provisions: they outraged everybody. The early premature call in Florida infuriated Bush supporters because it came while polls were still open there. The late premature call infuriated Gore supporters because it made it appear that Gore was refusing to concede an election that he was officially declared to have lost. (Gore—unbelievably, given what had happened just seven hours earlier—took the networks' word for it and phoned his ill-considered concession to Bush.)

The short-term consequences of all this undecidability are not pleasant. Human beings don't like uncertainty, and Americans, especially, don't like admitting that politics is, after all, political—that you can't separate what is now high-mindedly being called "process" from the spin and the bad calls and the cockeyed ballots and the partisan lawsuits. In the longer term, though, this year's mess may teach a little humility. On the regular Wednesday evening-news shows, the network anchors offered a somewhat rueful assessment of the previous night's performance (generally using clips of other anchors' wrong calls). That the outcome of the election kept eluding the best guesses of the experts was, they suggested, the very meaning of democracy ("a gift," said Peter Jennings in his signoff, "from the Founding Fathers"). But it wasn't democracy that rose up and bit them where they least expected it. It was reality.

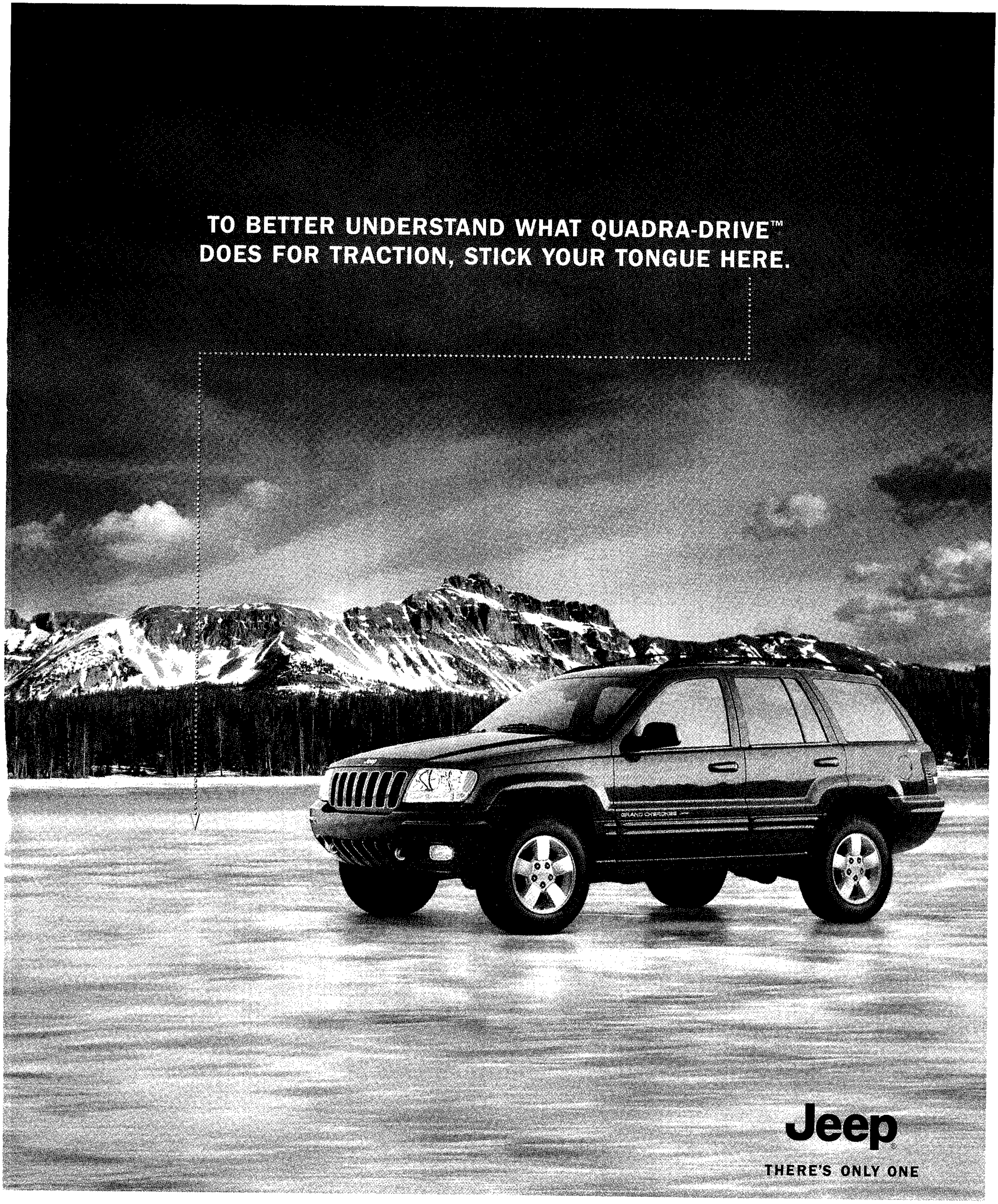
—*Louis Menand*

VICTORY DEPT.
HILLARY AT THE TOP OF THE HEAP

The ballroom of the Grand Hyatt hotel is not set up for a confetti drop, which is presumably why, on Election Night, Hillary Clinton's campaign decided to bring in mobile confetti guns. Made out of plastic tubing and run off an air pump, each gun required two people to operate it—one to hold the thing, and the other to dump shredded paper



Hillary Clinton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into the top. From where I was standing, about a dozen feet from the stage, the effect was less that of a party in progress than of a snowblowing operation.

Until the V.I.P. rush in the final moments, the only people sharing the stage with the First Lady were Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan; his daughter, Maura; Senator Charles Schumer; the President; and Chelsea. What had been expected to be a tight race had turned out to be a solid victory, and a clear affirmation of the First Lady: she had beaten Congressman Rick Lazio by twelve points. Still, Moynihan, who had been entrusted with the task of introducing her, seemed uncomfortable. "Do you want to hear from our next senator, Hillary Clinton? So do I" was all he could muster.

Schumer stood grinning fixedly at a bank of more than fifty TV cameras, while the President, who was red and puffy, kept seeming, in that red and puffy way of his, to be about to burst into tears. Meanwhile, the crowd, which didn't quite fill the ballroom, milled around the cash bar, where the talk was mostly about Florida, recently snatched back from Al Gore. The First Lady's campaign was, at its end, what it had been all along—extraordinary, unprecedented, and oddly joyless.

Her candidacy, which was conceived so audaciously, was carried out cautiously. The First Lady focussed on issues like asthma rates in the Bronx and utility costs in Buffalo, and whatever big ideas she might still harbor she kept to herself. From a strategic standpoint, this made a good deal of sense; her excruciating listening tour, her trips to senior centers and school auditoriums, and her earnest attention to the opinions of B-list officials across New York all helped answer the charge that she was in the race just for her own satisfaction.

But the constraint of her candidacy, if effective, also made the whole effort seem that much more enigmatic: did the First Lady really go to all this trouble to guarantee cheaper air routes out of Syracuse? Mrs. Clinton's victory speech had one laugh line, in which she talked about the epic labors of a campaign that had gone through "sixty-two counties, sixteen months, three debates, two opponents, and six black pants suits." But her emphasis, sombre and penitential, was mainly on the hard work that lay ahead.

At the end of her speech, she and the President plunged into the crowd, which made for a dramatic shot on television. Just beyond camera range, you could see a lot of people rushing, rather unceremoniously, for the exits. I found myself swept along behind Senator Schumer. Stuck to the back of his head were little bits of red, white, and blue confetti.

—*Elizabeth Kolbert*

THE GOSPEL TRUTH

The lesson is taken from I Samuel 17:

And there went out a champion from the camp of the Philistines, named Go-li-ath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

And at this stage the ratings did skip like a roe or a young hart.

And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth.

And a half of the people did rejoice therein. And the other half went unto the kitchen, and did make a sandwich, and could not speak. For their hearts were heavy, even as their taxes would henceforth be heavy, yea, even for generations.

And there came a voice saying, Hearken unto me, for I am Rath-er. And I say unto you, Hold it.

For the polls which lie at the outer door speak not of the truth, but of the devices of men's hearts. And the margin of error is three cubits in an hundred. Which soundeth as nothing, yet it may be as the blast of a trumpet.

And Go-li-ath arose, and did rub his forehead. And he cried even unto his brother, whose name was Jeb, saying, Jeb, I am whole again. And Jeb said, Surely thy brains were dashed out? And Go-li-ath said, I have no need of them.

And the Philistines did drop their sandwiches upon the ground and rejoice. But the people of David fell into lamentation, saying, This is the doing of him who is called Na-der.

And Rath-er said, Hold it.

And the Philistines and the people of David did groan; and they said as one voice, Here goeth we again.

And Rath-er spoke, saying, David hath not the Philistine slain, and the Philistine hath not David slain; but the money that is smart resteth upon the Philistine. And there shall be no triumph in the land before Thursday at the earliest. And Rath-er did rend his garments, yea, upon the air, and did cry, Lord, forgive me, for I and my children have led all peoples astray.

And the Lord spoke unto Rath-er, saying, Weep not; for hast thou not considered thy commercial slots, wherein men shall sell the fruits of their toil? For they shall be greater even than at the time of Sup-ab-owl.

And the Lord said also, Look unto the place where the sun shineth, which is called Flo-ri-da. The days of my servant Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; yet there liveth people in Flo-ri-da who maketh my servant Noah to look like a young kid. And thou givest these people the vote?

And Jesse, Son of Jack, did fly as the wind unto Flo-ri-da. And Jesse said, Lo, this place stinketh.

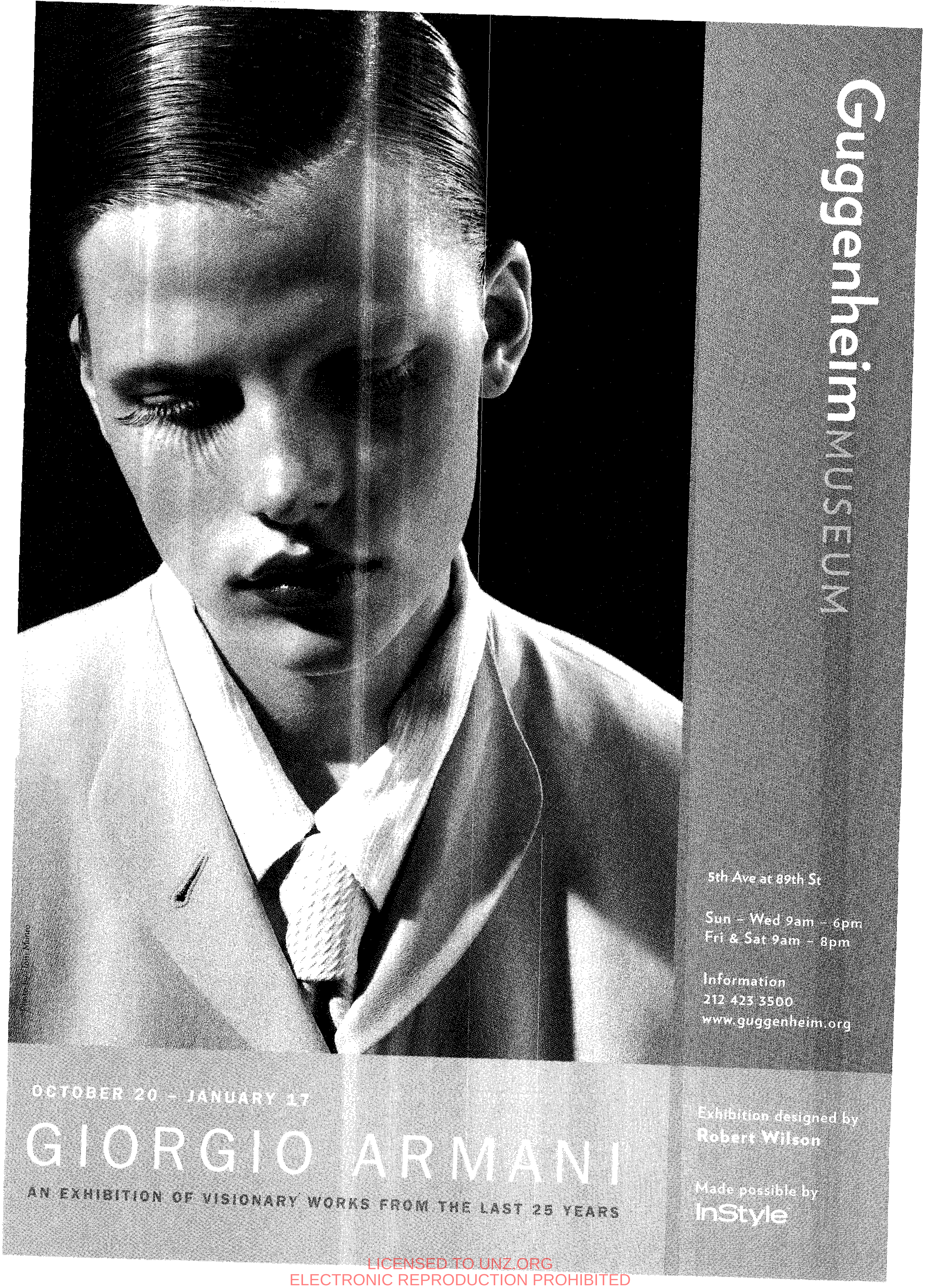
And there was peace in the heart of one man only. And the man was called Bill. And his wife's name was Hi-lla-ry. And he did hide from her, for he was afraid, for she slang him like a stone.

And it came to pass that Hi-lla-ry went out to rule all people upon earth, and her voice was as sounding brass. And the Lord did hide from Hi-lla-ry, for he was afraid also.

And Bill gave thanks and spoke unto the Lord, saying, Lord, I have the wings of fowl that are roasted, upon a place that is called Ba-be-q. Willst thou join me?

Here ends the lesson.

—*Anthony Lane*



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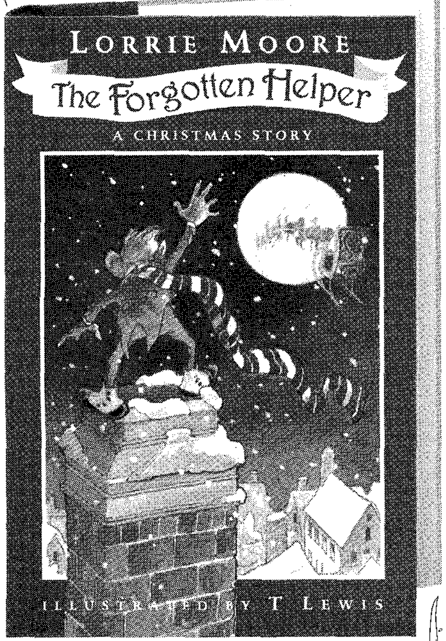

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NEW YORK JOURNAL

CHECK, PLEASE

What could two of the city's finest restaurateurs have to worry about?

BY ADAM GOPNIK

A thick imaginary line like the equator runs right across Twenty-third Street on the perfect map of New York, dividing the uptown restaurant culture from its downtown mirror image. Of course, many cities have a line separating fancy and plain, rich and poor, but no other city has a divide so neat between two styles of rich and fancy. There are many differences between these two styles, like the presence or absence of busboys and "captains" in tuxedos, but perhaps the most basic is that the uptown culture was, and still is, made by Europeans who came to America, and the downtown culture by Americans who at one time or another went to Europe. From Henri Soule's arrival at the World's Fair of 1939, through the coming of the Hungarians in the fifties and the Northern Italians in the seventies, right up to the emigration of the Le Cozes to start Le Bernardin, the essential pattern uptown is that of emigration and innovation. Downtown, the pattern is more often that of Americans who do a *stage* in a French kitchen and come back and open a place of their own.

The downtown manner probably began in the winter of 1979, when Karen and David Waltuck opened their restaurant, Chanterelle, at the corner of Grand and Greene Streets, in SoHo, with David in the kitchen and Karen running the dining room. The place was tiny, with only ten tables, and the new style was immediately announced by the menu, which was handwritten in an italic flourish by Karen, and entirely in English. The Waltucks had been counselled by a lot of downtown people, and especially by the designer Bill Katz, who encouraged David to go to cooking school and then designed a room for him to cook in. Katz's design dogma included pale-apricot-colored walls, big bouquets of flowers, and comfortable Biedermeier chairs, with nothing ever added or altered. (When the restaurant moved to Harrison Street, in 1989, the setup grew a little but otherwise remained the same.)

David proved to be a consistently simple and vivid French-American cook, producing intense, sharp-focus food. As the uptown guru George Lang has said, "Everything that tastes exquisite is on the borderline of tasting foul" (salty caviar, rich foie gras, ripe brie). David knew where the borderline was: he'd cook a rack of lamb with vinegar and mint, or oysters with white-truffle cream. Rapidly, Chanterelle became what food critics would call the "quintessential downtown temple." (In the current Zagat guide, for instance, it is ranked second only to Le Bernardin, the uptown temple.)

For years, the Waltucks resisted doing what has become usual for a New York cook, and that is to open a second restaurant. The first thing a New York cook does after opening a restaurant that can get four stars is to open one next door that can't. Le Alte Kocker has scarcely got its due in Wednesday's *Times* when Café Alte Kocker opens downstairs; Pal Joey's opens on Tuesday and Still Palier Joey's opens on Sunday. This urge to instant diversification, people in the business insist, reflects not greed or "line extension," or even an urge to cash in when you can, but the curious economics of selling fancy food in New York. The common wisdom is that the way to make money is to produce something of high status that rich people are eager to have and then to sell it to them for more than anybody in his right mind ought to pay. With a restaurant, though, profits are small, and if an owner wants to increase them he has to either make more money out of each seat—a hard thing to do when the diner, having waited a month for his reservation, is inclined to hold on to his table like General

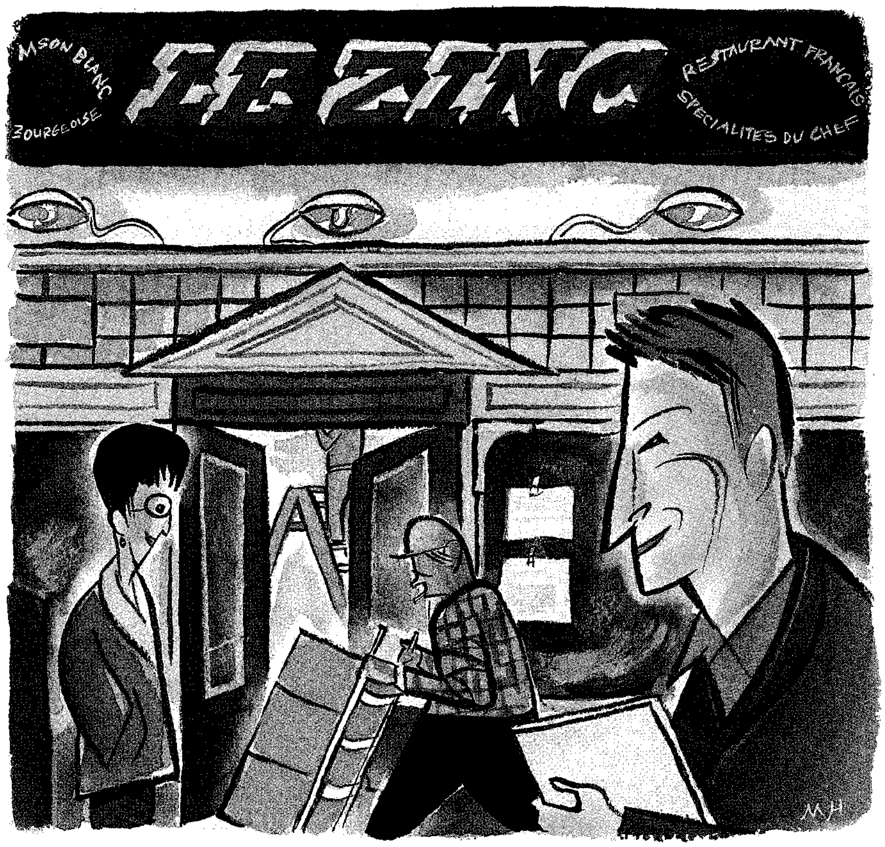
Gordon holding on to Khartoum—or find some tables someplace else to make more money out of. This process of the plain second restaurant financing the fancy first, a refined local version of bait and switch, has been going on for so long now that some of the second restaurants have lingered as monuments long after the firsts have passed into memory. La Côte Basque, for instance, one of the last remaining places that food critics like to call "temples of haute cuisine," was begun as a casual alternative to Henri Soule's even fancier Le Pavillon.

At the end of this month, the Waltucks, after twenty-one years with one restaurant, will open their own casual alternative. It will be called Le Zinc, and it will be in the same place as the old Le Zinc, on Duane Street, which was popular in the eighties. It will, as they imagine it, be a real bistro. It will be open all night, and all day Christmas and New Year's; it will be relatively cheap (entrées will cost around fifteen dollars), it won't take reservations, and their hope is that it will manage to revivify an increasingly stuffy downtown food culture and at the same time finally let them make enough money so that they will, so to speak, be able to afford to eat in their own four-star restaurant.

It is hard to build a better mousetrap when you are baiting the trap with foie gras. "The profit margins are low for the restaurant business generally," David Waltuck said the other afternoon, when he and Karen were taking a lunch break from working on the new place. He is a close-spoken man who resembles Christian Slater in kitchen whites. "And in the high end it becomes very difficult. There's very little leeway in what we do. Chanterelle in a sense is like a child who's grown up, and it has its own rules, its own demands, that even I can't really alter. If I want to do, say, a beef filet, I have to think of plating it, and I do oysters and wild mushrooms or something that will make it appropriate for Chanterelle. Listen, it's fancy food."

MARCELLUS HALL

Karen added, "It's no one thing, really, it's a million small things, a silver spoon goes into the garbage and it's fifteen dollars, a crystal glass breaks, and I smile, and, hey, it's twenty-five dollars, which is fine, but, still, you have to think about it." Karen is small and dark-haired, a rushing, fluent talker, with a strong New York accent. She speaks a kind of downtown version of Stengelese, and just as Stengelese, with its sideways glances and complicated clauses, perfectly reproduced the mind of a manager at work—simultaneously thinking about the guy on third, the history of the Yankees, and who's starting tomorrow—Karen's talk reproduces a first-class restaurateur's mind, keeping an eye on the front of the room, the back of the room, the mood of the diners, the quality of the service, the need of the next table, while making sure that everyone has been transported and that none of the silver has ended up in the garbage or somebody's pocket.



Karen and David Waltuck finally open a casual alternative to their fancy place.

"Basically, the economics are weird, because people think they are paying for the food and the wine and the care," she went on, "but the truth is that what they are paying for is space and time, which are just irreducibly expensive in New York. It's the space between tables and the time you take to eat. In an ordinary place, turnover is key, but with us if someone reserves a table at seven-thirty I have to count on him being there all night. In a restaurant, every table is its own world: you have to treat it with that kind of care—who wants to talk, who doesn't, who needs advice, who wants to be left alone. And the experience of the restaurant isn't over when it's over but goes on to the feelings people have about it afterward, so that there's a limit to how much you can ask for a bottle of wine, because someone sees it in a wine store a few days later and feels for a moment that he's been taken advantage of, he's unhappy, pleasure's been stolen, diminished. It's all those things turning together that makes it hard to make money."

The Waltucks began looking seriously for a second place about two years ago; they have two children, Sarah, eleven, and Jake, nine, and, like many New York parents, at their backs they always hear school tuition drawing near.

"We didn't want to do a secondary, café kind of restaurant, like Bouley

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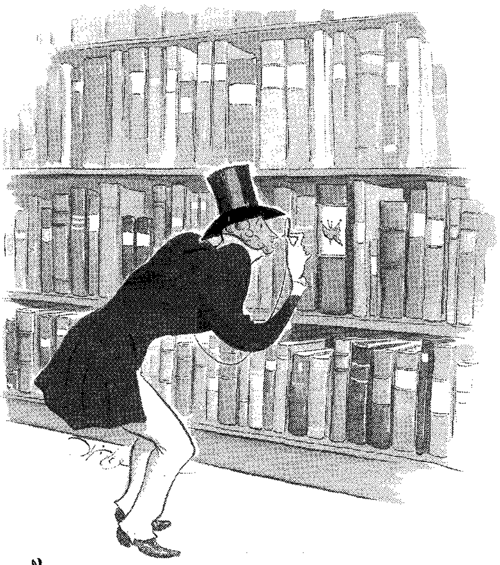

Bakery or something, but a real bistro, with real bistro food and bistro prices. It had to be under our control, something we could manage," Karen was saying earlier this year. She was standing in the middle of the still unrenovated space of the old Le Zinc. Like every unrenovated space, the place looked less promising than diminished, emptied out rather than about to be replenished. Tables and light and gaiety double the size of a room, and their absence cuts it in half. Traces of old fixtures were outlined on the floor, and the wire roots where sconces had long ago been torn out dotted the walls. Gray light tried to force its way through the soaped windows.

She was unperturbed. "Let me show you," she said. "The bar will be here." She gestured toward some bare board and plaster dust, "and then we'll have a few small tables near it—I think that one of the things that make a place nice is when there are two spaces, so that you don't feel totally thrust in—and then this is the room." She stepped over an imaginary line in the map in her own head, into the big room. "With banquettes running around the wall and free-standing tables in between." She looked happy. She was already in it.

After the Waltucks got the commercial lease on the Zinc space, they formed a corporation and began attracting a little syndicate of small investors—friends of the old restaurant mostly, rather than professional investors. They needed around a million dollars for the new restaurant. A third of it would go into "key money," for the lease and the new design, which Bill Katz would provide. They budgeted out all the odd, hidden costs that other young couples who dream of starting a restaurant never think of until the place closes the following year: nonvariable labor costs, for instance, and credit-card fees. Another unexpected cost is feeding dinner to the people you have hired to feed dinner to people. "Staff meal" is one of the responsibilities of a good restaurant, and it is important for the cook to make dinners that keep up morale without costing too much. David not only has done this but has in many ways come to prefer the food—braised pork shanks

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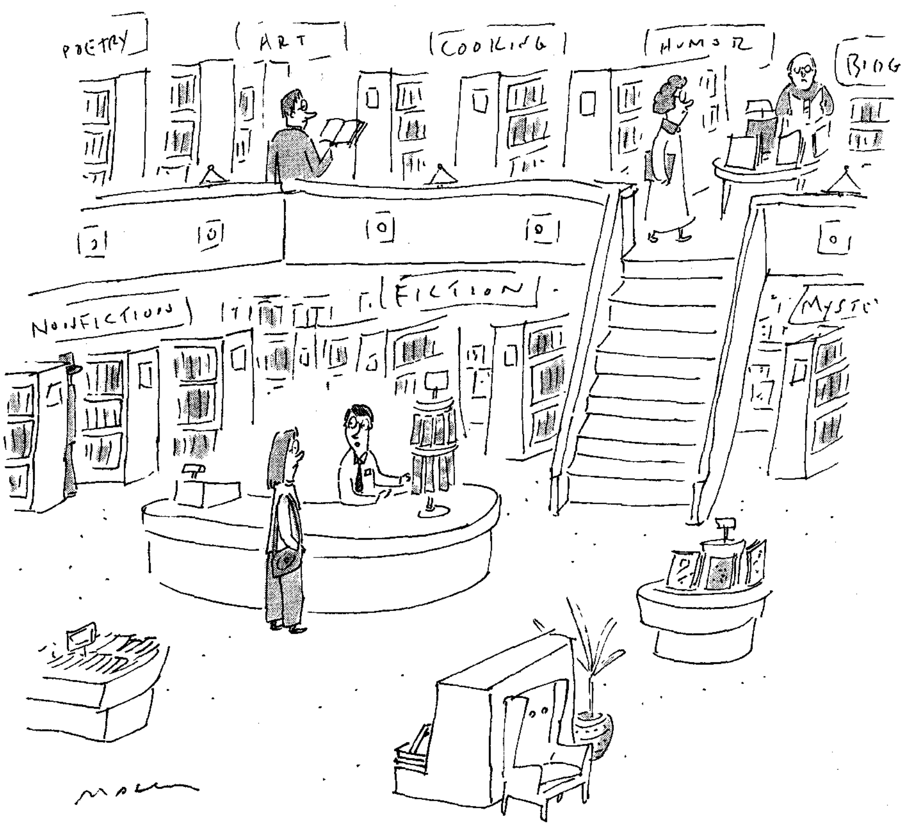

“The guy that knows about the books isn’t here today. I’d be more than happy to suggest a bookmark.”

• •

and goulash and other homey things—he makes for the staff to the food he makes for the guests. In fact, the food he makes for the staff is the subject of his first recipe book, “Staff Meals from Chanterelle,” which will come out next month. It is this cooking that will be the basis of the food at Le Zinc. (The kitchen will be supervised by an old assistant of David’s named Michael Sullivan. “He’s perfect,” Karen says. “He’s, like, into sandwiches. He can conceptualize brunch.”)

The economics of the restaurant business depend chiefly on two things: the turnover of tables and the money you can draw from the bar. The bar at an expensive restaurant, like the popcorn counter at a big multiplex, looks like an old-fashioned amenity, or a place to park people while they wait for a table, but it is really the cash machine; what money you make you basically make there. Although liquor—brown goods—accounts for only about twenty per cent of the typical take of a restaurant, the profit margin on it is almost twice as high as it is on wine or food. If, say, you buy a hundred and fifty thousand dollars’ worth of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, you can expect to sell it, bottle by bottle, for around five hundred thousand dollars. If, on the other hand, you buy a hundred and fifty thousand dollars’ worth of Smirnoff or Canadian Club, you can expect to sell it, shot by shot, for around eight hundred thousand dollars. This difference is often the difference between making money and losing it. There is no bar at Chanterelle, and this has always lamed its profits. Le Zinc will not only have a bar—it will be named for its bar. (“The zinc” is French slang for the counter at a bar; it’s what bars used to be made of.)

Apart from liquor sales, the crucial element in the New York restaurant business is how many “turns” each table generates. Turns are the number of times a table is occupied in one night by different people—at the simplest level, this means that with about two turns a night, seventy seats can produce a hundred and thirty-five covers. Restaurants still depend very much on Friday and Saturday nights, and, on an average Saturday night in the first year, a place that’s open late might hope for turns in the neighborhood of five and a half, meaning that the same table needs to be occupied five and a half times between seven at night and four in the morning. (The half turn, presumably, is the woman who orders only a salad and grilled shrimp, one in every crowd.)

Although the Waltucks will obviously try to put more people into their new restaurant, the real job they have is to turn the tempo of turns into a rhythm of pleasure. “I want people to feel that energy positively, as a positive thing—that’s the fun,” Karen says. “That’s what makes the bistro the place you want to go. You don’t want that quiet all the time.”

Yet even in the rosiest scenario the actual profits would, by the standards of American food business, be relatively small. Karen and David, after their backers have been paid out, can expect to take home in income about what an associate in a midtown law firm now makes. No matter how fancy it gets, the restaurant business in New York is still not unlike running the tavern in a Gold Rush town in the Yukon: it is basically a business of packing people in on Friday and Saturday nights and hoping they drink.

“Of course I’m worried. I always worry,” David was saying. “We have to be busy.” The two of them were back, only last week, in the new restaurant.

“I’m not worried,” Karen contradicted, though she nodded as she did so. By now, the new place had begun to show signs of being born. Bill Katz had decided to make the walls out of a straw-reinforced, natural adobe-style stucco, with the straw visible, which also smells nice and gives the room a textured lightness, more Southwest than Left Bank. “It’s weird, but if you do it right you can sort of reverse the order of things,” she said. The empty room had become a place. “Every restaurant is a little country, and every table is a world.” ♦

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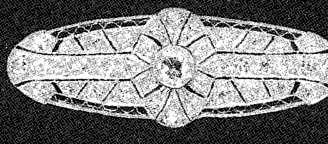

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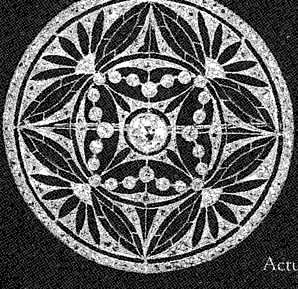

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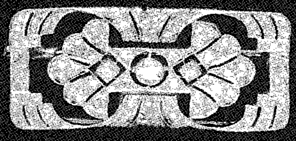

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MY SEXUAL FANTASIES

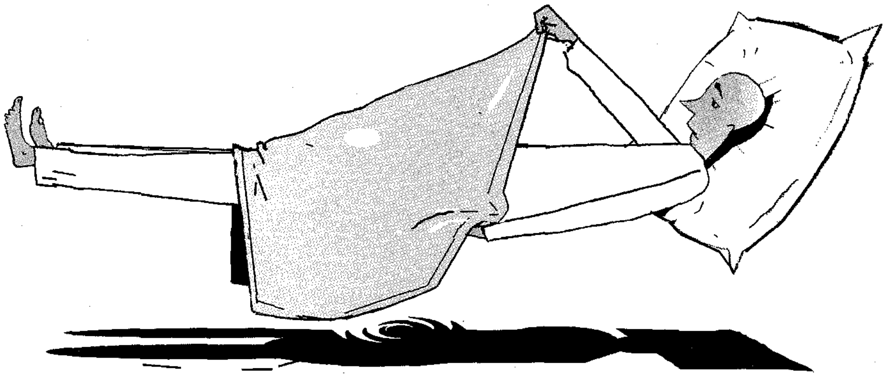
BY JIM WINDOLF

It's no fun when people tell you their dreams. But sexual fantasies are a different story. Even writing the words "sexual fantasies" sort of puts me in a "sexy" mood. With that in mind, I've decided to share a few of mine. Here goes!

The Lady Golfers

It's summertime and I'm caddying again, carrying bags for Mrs. Thomas, a blonde, and Mrs. Bunch, a redhead. We're in the woods along the eighth hole, and we're looking for a lost ball. We're far from the civilizing influence of the clubhouse (*oh, this is going to be good*) and the air is crackling with heat.

"Do you see it? Do you see my ball?"



ISTVAN BANYAI

"Not yet, Mrs. Bunch."

"Call me Carolyn. I don't like losing these things, you know. They cost a dollar-fifty apiece."

I see something in the leaves—but it's a 100-compression Titleist with a black number 3. A man's ball. Mrs. Bunch is using a womanly Maxfli.

"Now, *where* is that damn ball?" she says.

(*Let's not waste too much time looking for the ball. It's—what the hell time is it?—it's one-thirteen, and you've got to be up at seven for that thing.*)

Now Mrs. Thomas, in yellow culottes with little green turtles on them, is coming toward Mrs. Bunch and me. I can hear the spiked undersides of her golf shoes on the leaves as she gets closer.

"Can I just take the five-wood from my bag?" she says—and gives me a little smirk.

(*The smirk is nice, but Mrs. Thomas should be hot with lust by now. It's one-sixteen. If we hit one-thirty, that means five and a half hours of sleep, and you know how you are when you don't get your six.*)

The sunlight is slanting through the branches. (*Not a bad touch: helps set the scene, makes it real.*) A crow sails into my line of vision and lands on a branch. (*The crow's a bit much.*) The crow caws: "Caw! Caw!" (*Lose crow.*) The crow flies off. Now Mrs. Thomas is standing right beside me—I feel the heat of her body—and she slips the five-wood out of its knit cover.

"I can't hit the irons for some reason. I'm all right on the practice range, but I'm a basket case on the course. Why do you think that is?"

"Probably mental," I say.

"Is that so?"

(*Do we really need this? Let's get it on already.*)

Swat!

"Damn bugs!" Mrs. Bunch says. "Some gnat got me on the upper thigh."

(*Yeah, right, like she would be so specific in describing where it had bitten her.*)

"Let me see it," says Mrs. Thomas.

(*As if Mrs. Thomas would care. This is ludicrous—a gnat bite as a sexual catalyst? You can do better than this. What time is it now? One-twenty-four. Shit!*)

"It's right here," says Mrs. Bunch, lifting her pink skirt a little.

Mrs. Thomas kneels down on the ground, her bare kneecaps hitting the leaves. (*What's she going to do—scratch it? This is not good. Think, think! You've got yourself into a sexual-fantasy corner!*) She takes the hem of Mrs. Bunch's skirt between her fingers. (*I don't know where you're going with this, counsellor, but I'll allow it.*)

Rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr! (*The hell?*) It's the greenskeeper, riding a lawn tractor nearby. (*He does not need to be here.*) The tractor speeds off toward the horizon. I look over at the ladies again and see what I've been hoping to see for so long. The Maxfli.

"Mrs. Bunch—Carolyn—I got it. I found your ball!" I say (*unaware that I have fallen asleep*).

Explorer and Native Girl

I'm an explorer. (*Yeah, good, something different.*) It's 1510 (*good, 1510, long time ago*), and I'm coming upon a new part of the world. (*Well, new to me. To the people who've lived here for thousands of years, it's old hat.*) There she is, and she's not even dressed, at least not by my European standards of *habillement*. She's drinking from a pond, like an animal. (*Wait a minute. Does this scenario show me to be some kind of sexual imperialist, intent on exploiting a girl from an indigenous culture?*) I walk closer to the pond's edge. Our eyes meet.

She runs. Oh, how she runs.

I give chase, following the nymph through the woods. She's laughing delightfully—actually, it sounds like a scream. Yes, it's a native cry for help. Here come the males, with spears. Back to the ship! Run! (*This really isn't going to work at all. Try something a little less . . . outdoorsy.*)

The Flappers

The year is 1924, and we find ourselves in a grand Park Avenue dining room. I see her across the table, my sexual quarry—a saucy flapper with short black hair and possible sapphic tendencies. Her bare arm is even with the bare arm of the flapper seated next to her. The girls are buttering bread in tandem. I take a piece of bread from the silver dish and I, too, begin buttering. And so here we are, buttering and buttering in 1924.

"I don't believe I've made your acquaintance," the first flapper says, still buttering. "Are you new to New York?"

Light from the chandelier catches their painted lips. The flappers' mouths shine as they . . . continue to butter their pieces of bread.

I, too, continue buttering and buttering with gusto until I (*fall dead asleep*).

"All in the Family"

"Awwww-chie! C'meeeya!"

(*No, no, please, not the Edith Bunker one.*)

"Awww-chie! I got ya bee-ya for ya just like ya like it!"

(*No, God in Heaven, please, no.*)

"Hello, dingbat. You're my good dingbat."

"Aww, Aw-chie."

(*Why? Why? Why this?*)

"Edith, you're my little goyle."

(*No! No! Cut! Make them sing on the piano bench.*)

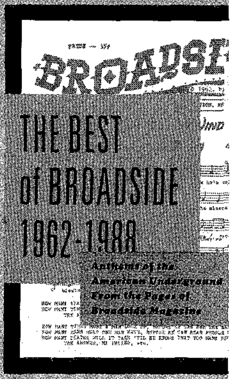
"Didn't need no welfare state."

"Everybody pulled his weight."

"Gee, our old La Salle ran great."

"Those were the days."

Archie puts the stogie back in his mouth. Edith gazes up at him lovingly. (*Now get to sleep, God damn it.*)



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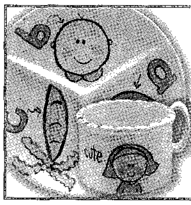

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Me and My Gym Teacher

Miss Lupree was a gym teacher at my school. She had curly black hair and wore a whistle around her neck. Her legs were tan and strong between black gym shorts and white high-tops. Today, it's just the two of us in the gymnasium after school. The lights are out and I've come by to . . . (*quick, a pretext, why would I be with her after school?*) . . . to see if she'll . . . donate money for the walkathon. (*Oh, Jesus.*)

"Hey, Miss Lupree."

(*What age am I? If it's the present day, with me being almost forty, Miss Lupree would be about . . . sixty. Imagine that. Time is rolling over everybody. It is relentless. And to think of the bad stuff I've been through in that time—what if it was worse for her? Her parents are probably dead by now, some of her friends, too. So just be young. It's high school again, and you're seventeen and Miss Lupree is in her thirties. Simpler that way.*)

"What do you need?" Miss Lupree says.

(*"I need you"—tell her that!*) Instead I say, "I'm in this walkathon on Saturday, and I need people to pledge money. Most people are giving a dollar a mile."

"A dollar a mile? You obviously have no idea what they pay us around here."

"If it's too much you could—you could pledge, like, a penny."

"I'm just joshing you. You want me to sign something?"

"Yeah, just sign here."

"You got a pen?"

"Uh, no."

"Walking around with a signup sheet and you don't have a pen?" (*Oh, Freud would have a field day with this one. God, I hate it when people talk about Freud having a field day. As if Freud ever had a field day. What the hell is a field day, anyway? I think Marshall Crenshaw had an album called "Field Day." Christ. Marshall Crenshaw. I think he was in "Beatlemania." That's the last play I remember being at the Winter Garden Theatre before "Cats" showed up. Now "Cats" has closed, after, like, eighteen years. Come on, back to Miss Lupree.*) "Come to the office. I think I have a pen in my handbag."

We cross the gleaming hardwood floor. The movable bleachers are stacked against the wall. (*Must we dwell on the movable bleachers just now?*) Now we're going into her office. (*Where "it" will happen, no doubt!*) At the desk . . . damn, it's Coach Robb. Mustache, clipboard, whistle. He's the man who benched me for a full season of junior-varsity basketball because of my (*read, "his"*) "attitude problem."

"Well, if it isn't Dr. J.," Coach Robb says, using his very own derisive nickname for me.

"Hey, Coach."

"Just let me get a pen," Miss Lupree says. "I know I have one around here somewhere."

(*Oh, Christ, at least let her find a pen!*)

"What's this guy up to, Donna?" Coach Robb asks.

"I'm sponsoring him for the walkathon."

"Character like you involved in a charitable event?" he says. "What's the catch, bud?"

"You know, it's, like, a walkathon thing," I say.

Miss Lupree signs my sheet of paper. I can smell her perfume—or is it soap? Does she shower in the girls' locker room during the school day? (*God almighty.*)

"There you go."

"Uh, thanks."

"Now get the hell outta here, mister, and don't come back," Coach Robb says, using his "rough" humor on me.

I leave the office and end up wandering around in my old school, alone. It's late in the school year, and there's no air-conditioning. I can feel a heavy warmth in the hallways, and it's dark and shady and strange. I get a whiff of methanol by the science lab and the smell of glue and paper near the yearbook room and the smell of cigarette smoke as I approach the faculty lounge, and I keep walking until I (*just lie awake in bed, wondering if Miss Lupree really is old, or maybe even dead, and thinking of funerals I've gone to, and wondering when I will die, or if I'll have to watch everyone else die, everyone I love, or almost everyone, one by one, before I go. What the hell is the point? No, no, don't see it that way. Haven't we been through this a million times? We live for a while and then we're in the ground, and that should be enough. You would have to be ungrateful, or arrogant, or spoiled, or have no appreciation for life itself, to want more*). ♦

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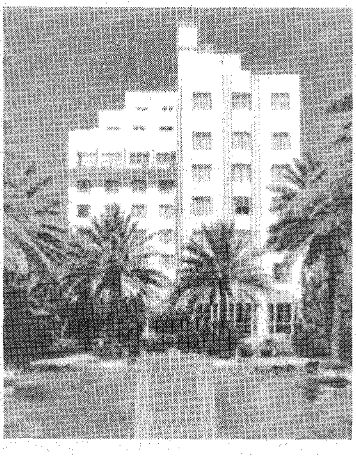

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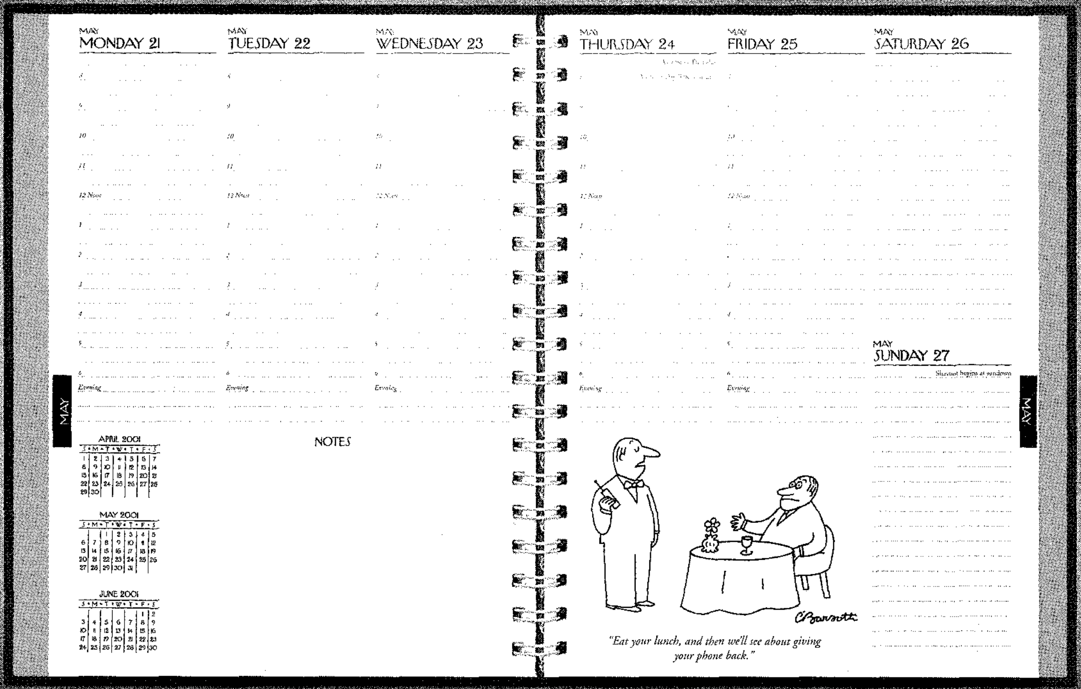
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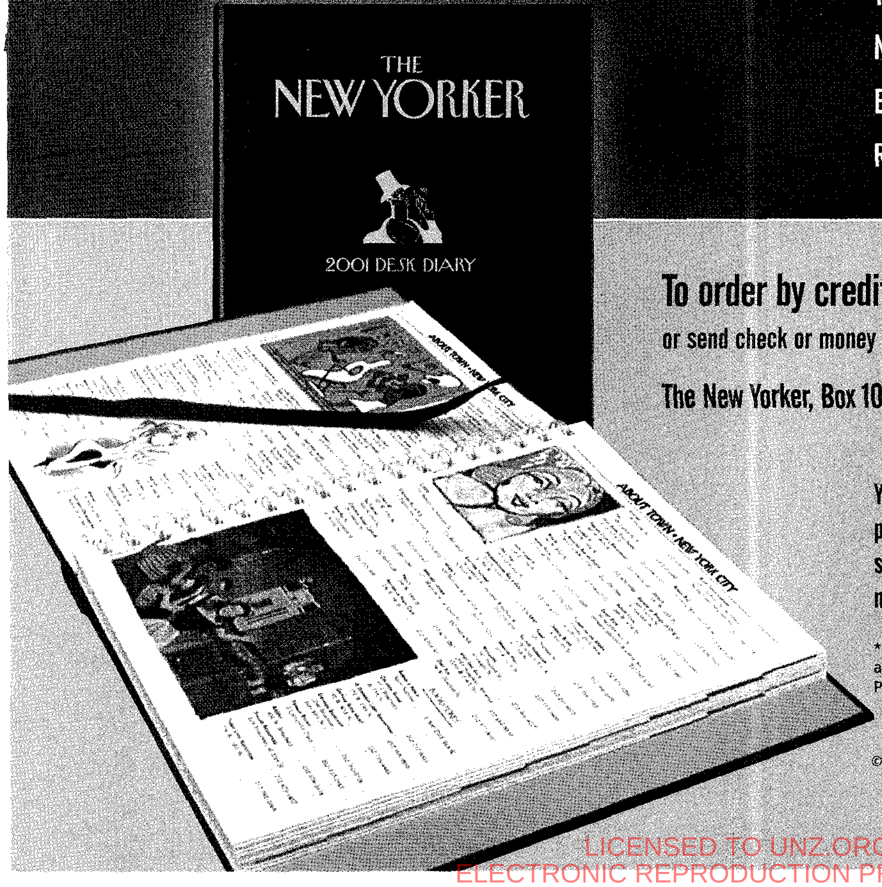
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LETTER FROM QATAR

DEMOCRACY BY DECREE

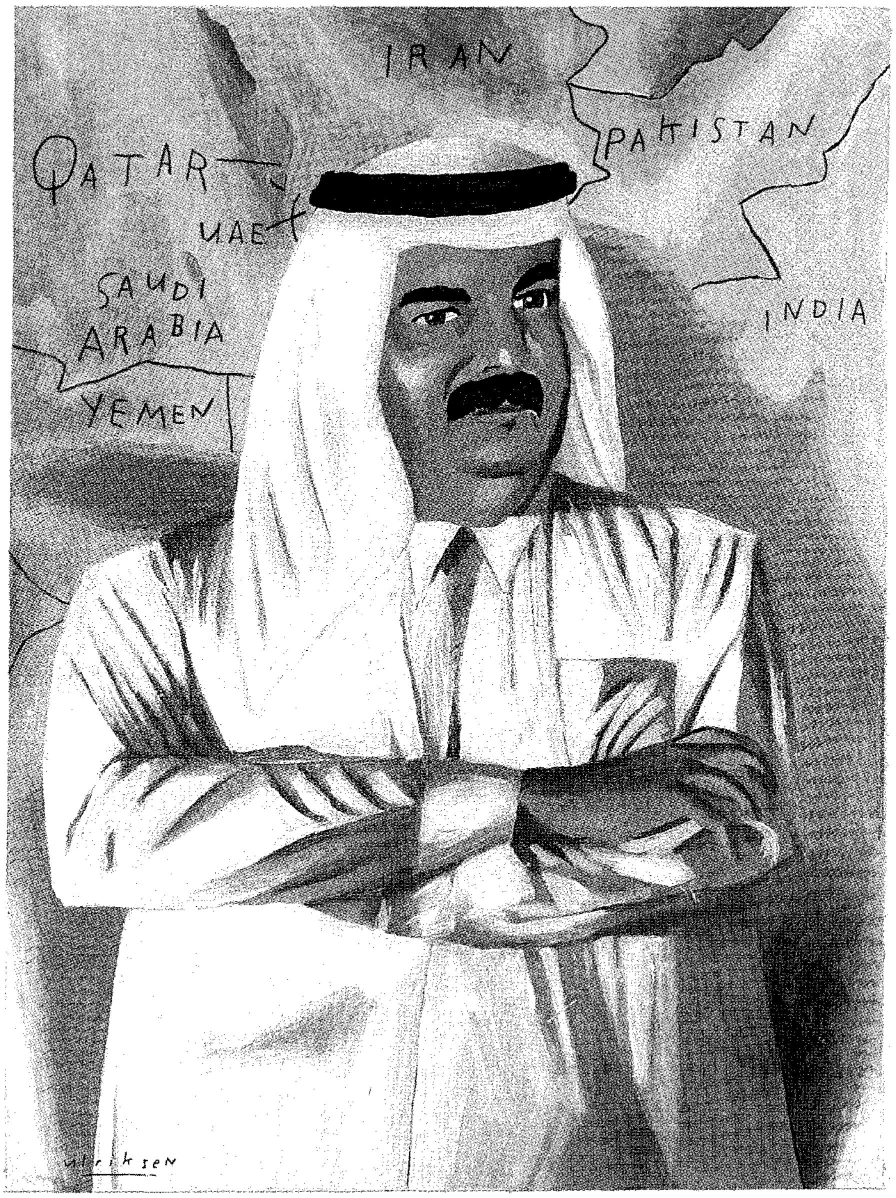
Can one man propel a country into the future?

BY MARY ANNE WEAVER

Qatar, the tiny, oil-rich emirate adjoining Saudi Arabia, has long been one of the most traditional societies in the Persian Gulf. It is a place where women still go about veiled, where Bedouin tribesmen, chattering to one another via cell phone, still herd their sheep on foot, where falconry and camel races are the preferred royal sports. It came as a surprise, therefore, when, on the morning of June 27, 1995, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, the forty-five-year-old son of the ruling emir, Sheikh Khalifa, proclaimed that he was taking over the government from his father, who was vacationing in Switzerland. In recent years, Sheikh Khalifa had been inclined to rule in name only, preferring to spend his days on the French Riviera and to leave affairs of state to Sheikh Hamad, his oldest son and the heir apparent; for that reason, the coup, which was peaceful, was sanctioned not only by members of the ruling al-Thani dynasty but also by leaders of the country's power élite. After taking control, Sheikh Hamad telephoned his father, in Zurich. Khalifa refused to take the call.

A year later, the new emir swiftly put down an attempt by his father to regain the throne, and issued a number of writs against him, demanding, among other things, that he return three billion dollars of state money that he had transferred to his personal accounts. Then, to the astonishment of his subjects, Sheikh Hamad decreed that Qatar was to become a democracy. He had already dismantled the Ministry of Information, abolished censorship, and launched the freest cable-television station in the Arab world. In 1998, he announced that women had the right to vote, and the right to run for office. And on March 8, 1999, he presided over the first elections in Qatar's history—for twenty-nine seats on a municipal council, which advises him. In the meantime, he appointed a commission to draft a constitution, which will allow for an elected parliament. Although the commission's work is not expected to be completed until 2002, Sheikh Hamad's actions in the conservative, autocratically governed Arab world amount to a one-man revolution.

It was during the mid-eighteenth century that Sheikh Hamad's al-Thani ancestors migrated from the vast desert of the Arabian Peninsula to what is now Qatar (pronounced "cutter"). A wind-swept, thumb-shaped peninsula of sand dunes and salt flats, jutting a hundred miles from Saudi Arabia into the Persian Gulf, it is about the size of Connecticut. Viewed from the air, it resembles a giant pancake—flat and tan-colored, with brown splotches—but its two-hundred-mile coastline is magnificent. When the al-Thanis arrived, the area was already established as one of the major pearling centers of the world. The pearl beds drew the al-Thanis and other nomadic Bedouin tribes increasingly close to the sea, where they fished, dived, and transported their pearls in wooden dhows, primarily to British India. A shrewd and martial people, the al-Thanis rose to prominence by negotiating deals with the Saudis, fighting the Bahrainis, and, against great odds, defeating the Turks. In 1868, the



Sheikh Hamad overthrew his father, then announced the first elections in Qatar's history.

al-Thani ruler Sheikh Muhammad presented himself to colonial officials of Disraeli's government as the representative of the Qatari tribes. Had the British not recognized him, Qatar might well have been absorbed into Saudi Arabia. Instead, a 1916 agreement with the Crown provided for eventual independence.

For many years, pearls remained Qatar's principal natural resource. Then, in 1939, oil was discovered, and new reserves are still being found today. Yet the government is relying on its oil revenues to finance the development of an even more lucrative resource—natural gas, which was discovered offshore in 1971 (the year Qatar gained its independence from Britain) and promises to make the country one of the world's largest energy suppliers.

Sheikh Khalifa, who took power in 1972, presided over the establishment of an almost all-encompassing welfare state: his citizens were given free education, health care, housing, and utilities; they received generous interest-free loans; and they paid no income tax. But, while other countries in the Gulf became diversified mercantile and financial centers, Qatar, which had in effect ceded control of its defense and foreign policy to Saudi Arabia, began to stagnate. "Khalifa wasn't a bad ruler," a veteran Western diplomat to the country told me. "He was simply a seventeenth-century ruler. Everything stopped."

Sheikh Hamad, who was born in 1950, was the favorite of his father's seven sons. At seventeen, he was sent to Sandhurst, and after a brief stint at Cambridge he returned to Qatar. In 1972, he was made commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and five years after that he was appointed Qatar's first Minister of Defense and named as his father's heir. Sheikh Hamad concentrated on developing the country's volunteer Army, Navy, and Air Force; together, they number fewer than twelve thousand men. In 1990, when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, Qatar joined in the action against Saddam Hussein.

The United States used the emirate as a staging base for the air assault on Iraq, stationing more than thirty-five hundred troops there. Sheikh Hamad, for his part, sent twenty-three hundred Qatar troops to the front, and they fought well. After the war, Sheikh Hamad began to negotiate a permanent defense relationship with the United States.

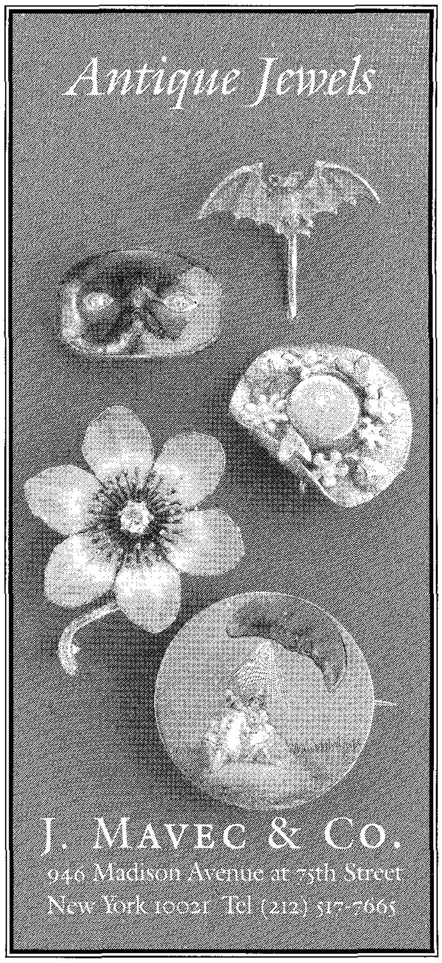
MARK ULRIKSEN

In 1992, Khalifa left his son in charge, and went to Cannes. Sheikh Hamad proceeded to purge the bureaucracy of the Old Guard and installed his own people—younger al-Thanis and members of other influential families—at all levels of the government. His advisers wanted to open the economy to foreign businessmen and to hasten development of the emirate's gas and oil reserves. In the late spring of 1995, Khalifa rushed back to Doha, the capital city, and reversed his son's decisions. He also threatened to install another son as his heir. But Khalifa soon left again for Europe, and Sheikh Hamad acted swiftly to block his return.

The Emiri Diwan, or seat of power, from which Sheikh Hamad rules, is housed in a light-filled array of suites in Doha Palace, a sprawling expanse of teak and marble that commands panoramic views of Doha Bay. As I was ushered down a series of hushed, chandeliered corridors, I thought of the new generation of royal Arab leaders who, during the past few years, have come to power: Abdullah II, in Jordan; Mohammed VI, in Morocco; Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, in Bahrain. Like Sheikh Hamad, they had all been educated in the West, and they pursue agendas that, in embracing technology and economic and bureaucratic reforms, are strikingly different from those of their fathers.

An aide was waiting for me outside the Emir's door, and after a few minutes I was escorted into his private study. A tall, imposing man with jet-black hair and wire-rimmed spectacles, Sheikh Hamad stood in the middle of the room, alone. He was wearing the traditional white *dishdasha* robe, a white kaffiyeh with black cords on his head, and leather sandals. Without any show of formality, he strode across the room to shake my hand. His voice was full of energy as he asked about my visit: "I understand you've been travelling about. What did you think? You know, tourism is very important to me in diversifying our economy." He led me to the far end of the room, and, with a sweep of his hand, indicated that I should sit on a gilded sofa facing the sea. He settled into an armchair to my left. Two aides joined us to interpret, if the need arose. It did not. His English is impeccable.

In a speech at Georgetown University



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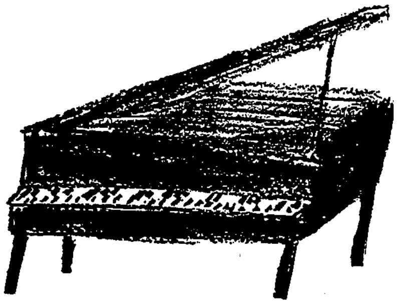
three years ago, Sheikh Hamad quoted President John F. Kennedy's remark that those who fail to make peaceful revolutions possible make violent revolutions inevitable. Now he said, "We have simply got to reform ourselves. We're living in a modern age. People log on to the Internet. They watch cable TV. You cannot isolate yourself in today's world. And our reforms are progressing well. In a tribal country like Qatar, however, it could take time for everyone to accept what we've done. But change, more change, is coming." He smiled.

Some Qatari friends of mine were concerned that the Emir might be trying to change too much too quickly, given the conservative habits of his subjects, whose country is one of only two Arab states—the other is Saudi Arabia—to practice the puritanical doctrine of Wahhabi Islam. When I mentioned this to him, he replied, "Your friends should read their history better. Democracy is not foreign to us. My grandfather and my great-grandfather used to have a *shura*"—council—"in their tents. All the people came and participated in it. And this is a form of democracy. But when oil came it introduced a whole new culture here. People suddenly found themselves so rich that they didn't know how to respond. Powerful countries came in to exploit the oil, and a lot of middlemen became involved. There was no control, no accountability. And, in the process, a gap developed between the old generation and the new, and the new generation forgot a lot about its traditions and culture. Now we are returning to the concept of the *shura* in a tent.

"There is no reason that women should not be part of the political process here," Sheikh Hamad went on. "The sister of my great-grandfather, who created this state, went into battle and fought against the Turks. Many women were involved at that time. They cared for the wounded, ferried water. They were actively engaged."

A servant came in with a tray of thimble-size porcelain cups and poured Bedouin coffee, which is bitter and has the consistency of tea. I glanced around the well-appointed but impersonal room. I'd been told that Sheikh Hamad was opposed to any cult of personality, and, in a departure from the usual practice throughout the Middle East, there was no portrait of him on the study walls.

I asked him whether Islamist political parties, banned in much of the Middle East, would be permitted in his new democracy. "I can't tell you what will happen now," he replied. "But there is no doubt that in the future we will have political parties here." He added, "I do not accept what happened in Algeria"—a reference to that country's 1992 elections, in which the military intervened to prevent an Islamist victory at the polls. "If you are elected in a contest that is free and fair, the results should be permitted to stand." He paused, and then mentioned Iran, which, despite its highly publicized crackdowns, has been quietly modernizing in recent years. "If you could see how they're making democracy work! And to think that only twenty years ago there were those who feared that Iran would export an Islamic revolution."



Doha is only thirty minutes by plane from the cosmopolitan centers of Dubai and Bahrain, yet it seems isolated and remote—an anonymous sprawl of gray, white, and ochre concrete office buildings, traffic circles, shopping centers, and government ministries. The city has no concert halls, no night clubs, and no bars; alcohol is banned. It has impressive museums containing Islamic manuscripts and ethnography, but no serious foreign-language bookstores. Yet Qatar has one of the world's highest literacy rates, and in a few years will likely have the world's highest per-capita G.N.P.

In a sense, Qatar is as much a club as it is a country, a place where everyone seems to know everyone else, and where everyone is linked, through business or family, to the ruling house. Out of a population of some six hundred thousand, more than four hundred thousand are foreigners. Egyptians, Palestinians, and Syrians help run the government; Americans and Canadians hold high positions

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LINES WRITTEN FOR A THIRTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Somewhere up in the eaves it began:
high in the roof—in a sort of vault
between the slates and gutter—a small leak.
Through it, rain which came from the east,
in from the lights and foghorns of the coast—
water with a ghost of ocean salt in it—
spilled down on the path below.
Over and over and over
years stone began to alter,
its grain searched out, worn in:
granite rounding down, giving way,
taking into its own inertia that
information water brought, of ships,
wings, fog and phosphor in the harbor.
It happened under our lives: the rain,
the stone. We hardly noticed. Now
this is the day to think of it, to wonder:
all those years, all those years together—
the stars in a frozen arc overhead,
the quick noise of a thaw in the air,
the blue stare of the hills—through it all
this constancy: what wears, what endures.

—*Eavan Boland*

in the gas and oil industries; Filipinos, Indians, and Pakistanis work as servants and in the five-star hotels. Qataris fill professional and managerial posts, and most of them have studied abroad.

To see more of the country, I set out from my hotel one morning with Qatari friends for what some people here call the "hinterland." Our destination was Khor al-Udeid, at Qatar's southern tip, a vast expanse of swirling dunes and protected beach on the Inland Sea. We got into a four-wheel-drive vehicle filled with picnic baskets, bottled water, mosquito repellent, and a tent, and left Doha on a well-paved highway that skirted the Persian Gulf. My companions were two women, Zakia Malallah and Moza al-Malki, and Moza's seven-year-old daughter, Dana. Moza was dressed in bluejeans, and she wore a black beret to cover her head. Zakia, who had removed her face covering only after we were safely out of the hotel, remained shrouded in a flowing black abaya and veil—a custom that is still observed by ninety-five per cent of Qatari women.

Moza, who is forty-two and was partially educated in the United States, is the country's first practicing psychotherapist; she has taught at Qatar University, has had her own television program on psychotherapy, and now writes a biweekly newspaper column. Zakia, who is forty and went to university in Cairo, is the first Qatari to have obtained a Ph.D. in pharmacology, and is the director of a government lab. Moza was the first woman in the emirate to drive: under circumstances that I could never fully understand, she had managed to obtain a license from the Ministry of the Interior in 1986, eleven years before her countrywomen were permitted—with the approval of their husbands or fathers—to take to the roads. Zakia, who also has a newspaper column, was one of the first female Qatari poets to be published abroad; she has written nine books of poetry.

Moza and Zakia threw themselves into last year's municipal elections, putting up campaign posters all over Doha. Both debated on television and on radio. Then Moza, to the dismay of her family, and some of her friends, decided to run for one of the advisory council's seats. Five other women also became candidates. All the women were defeated.

I asked Moza what the elections had been like. "It was a dazzling development, and it was so sudden. None of us expected it," she said. "I sent a questionnaire to my constituents, and I asked them, 'Have you ever heard of democracy?' Fifty per cent responded no. My mother's awareness of what this was all about centered on the word 'municipal.' She was furious when I decided to stand, and she asked me what I would do—collect the garbage?"

Moza went on to explain why all the female candidates had lost. "Simply because women didn't vote for any of us. Eighty per cent of our votes came from men. Was it tradition? Custom? Jealousy? Or was it a combination of the three? We have a long way to go. For a number of years, I was the only woman in this country who went on TV. But during the campaign I persuaded one of the other candidates to appear. She went totally shrouded in her abaya and veil. No one could see her! But what's important is that she went."

We had lunch at Khor al-Udeid, where the sea has dug a long channel into the desert sand. Flamingos strutted at the water's edge. Across the channel rose the towering cliffs of Saudi Arabia. Zakia introduced me to a group of nearby picnickers—Qatari men dressed in shorts and wearing American baseball caps. All of them worked for the élite Qatar General Petroleum Corporation, the government body that dominates Qatar's gas and oil industries. When I asked the men about Sheikh Hamad's reforms, some of them said that he had not gone far enough. At Q.G.P.C., they were charged with helping to diversify the economy, and they worried that until the reforms were accompanied by social change Qatar would find it difficult to compete with Dubai and Bahrain. "We have got to open up," one man said. "Qatar is simply too closed—even for Qataris." Another man broke in, "Qatar is so conservative that I can't even find a wife!" He said that he refused to allow his mother to find him a bride—a radical statement in a country where most marriages are arranged, and where nearly fifty per cent of marriages take place within extended families.

Earlier, Zakia had told me that she and Moza and their circle of friends were the only women she knew who went around Doha unescorted by men. "It's not easy for a man to permit his wife to work, to appear on television, to drive a car," she said. "Even among the younger generation, there are those who challenge

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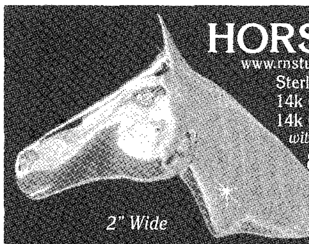
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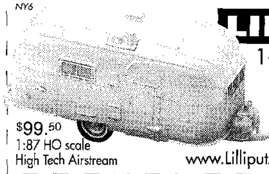
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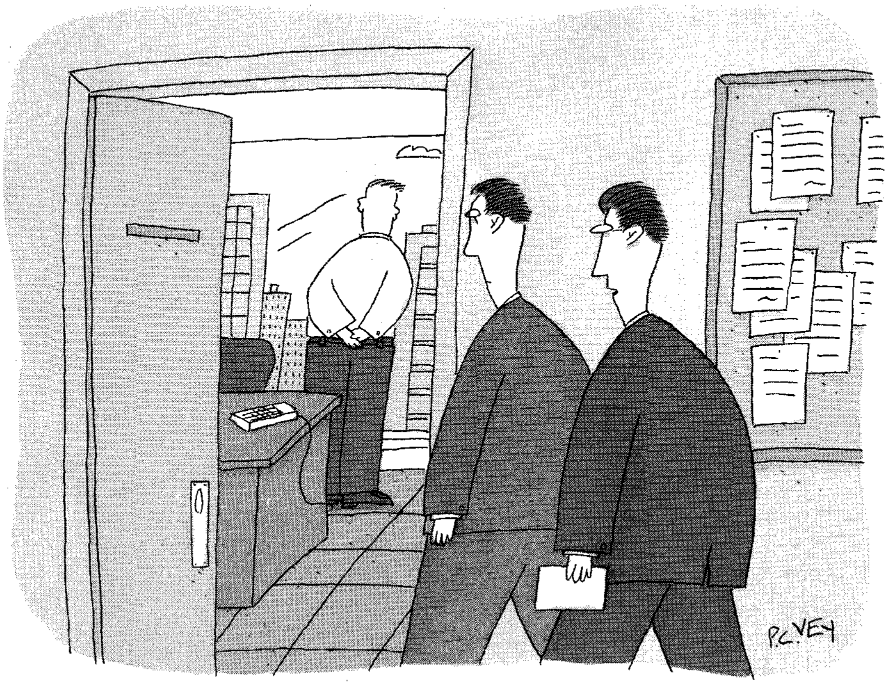


"Eventually, Howard wants to dump himself in the Atlantic and serve as an artificial reef for fish."

• •

a woman's leaving her house. But now, when a woman is educated, of course, she wants to work, and the irony is that the resistance she faces comes from her family, not from her government. We're constantly being told, 'Don't drive the car! Don't go to this or that restaurant!' We have special clubs for women, special times to view exhibitions, special areas in the cinema, in restaurants, and banks. Some banks even have separate banks! Even at the university, no classes are mixed. Although a woman professor can teach boys and a man can teach girls, the students themselves are totally segregated, on different campuses."

I asked Zakia why she continued to wear a veil. She replied, "I like it. I feel protected in it, and when I wear it I'm not bothered by men. The most important thing is to cover your hair, not your face."

"Is there a role model for Qatari women?" I asked.

Zakia smiled. "Iran," she said.

Qatar's most effective revolutionary enterprise is Al-Jazeera, a satellite news channel, which explores issues that have long been considered forbidden topics in the Arab world. Al-Jazeera has not only changed the nature of broadcast news in the Middle East; it has also given Qatar, one of the region's smallest states, its loudest voice. Of the Arab League's twenty-two member states, only Lebanon has not yet filed a protest against Al-Jazeera's programming or panelists. A few months ago, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco expressed their displeasure with the station by withdrawing their Ambassadors from Doha. And in Saudi Arabia and Algeria living rooms have sometimes gone dark when an Al-Jazeera program deemed offensive by those governments has been aired.

One evening, I went to the studios of Al-Jazeera to watch one of the station's most controversial shows, "The Opposite Direction," which is modelled on CNN's "Crossfire." The show's host, Faisal al-Kasim, is a thirty-eight-year-old Syrian with a Ph.D. in English literature. That evening, his subject was the visit of the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, to Israel, during which Jospin had been the target of stone-throwing Palestinian students in the West Bank because he denounced the Hezbollah's "terrorist acts" against Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon. Faisal's guests were two prominent intellectuals from Algeria and Iraq, and they debated whether the stoning was justified. By Western standards, their spirited conversation was not startling, but it was unprecedented in a world where most broadcasts consist of announcers on state-controlled channels droning on about the comings and goings of the chief of state. During Faisal's show, more than a hundred viewers called in, one of them from a tent in the middle of the desert, where he had a satellite dish.

Millions in the Arab world watch Al-Jazeera's programs. The Libyan leader, Muammar Qaddafi, once called in to offer his views on whether Arab nationalism was dead, and a few weeks ago Qaddafi actually appeared on the show—despite his recall of his Ambassador in Doha—in order to denounce the Arab summit that was about to convene in Cairo to censure Israel for its role in the spiralling violence against the Palestinians. In an unprecedented move by an Arab head of state, Qaddafi held up a copy of the summit's still-secret communiqué and criticized it as "full of nothing." It revealed Arab leaders as "naked and helpless," he said.

This was not Al-Jazeera's most sensational program. Last year, despite pressure from Saudi Arabia and the United States to ban the program, the station broadcast the Arab world's first interview with Osama bin Laden, Washington's most wanted fugitive. Viewers were calling the station hours after the segment had aired. Two months ago, a videotape of bin Laden, secretly delivered to the station, was broadcast. Shortly afterward, Al-Jazeera's extensive coverage of the escalating violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip earned official rebukes from the Egyptian government, whose Minister of Information has accused the station of calling for *jihad*, or holy war, in an effort to incite Egyptians and other Arabs to revolt against unpopular governments.

Al-Jazeera grew out of a 1994 deal between the BBC and the Saudi government to provide Arabic-language newscasts in the Middle East. Less than two years later, the arrangement fell apart, when the BBC demanded editorial independence from the House of Saud. Sheikh Hamad immediately hired the BBC's core news team—editors, reporters, and technicians, all of Arab descent, including Faisal al-Kasim—moved it to Doha, and underwrote Al-Jazeera with a five-year pledge of a hundred and fifty million dollars. Although Al-Jazeera is subjected to no official censorship, its critics charge that the station's editors are self-censoring, rarely reporting criticism of Qatari affairs. "It is still a crime to insult the Emir," one Western diplomat told me. "But nowhere in the law does it say that you can't insult Hosni Mubarak or King Fahd."

After the show, Faisal told me that the criticism was unjustified, and he mentioned a controversial program he had done on a Middle Eastern economic conference that Sheikh Hamad hosted, which was attended by Israel but boycotted by most Arab states. "One of my guests, a Kuwaiti professor, accused the Qatari government of playing into the hands of the Zionists," he said. "You know, we have been accused of being secretly financed by so many sides—a Turkish billionaire, the C.I.A., the Israelis, Saddam. Our entire budget is only thirty million dollars a year, and, in a country as rich as this, is it really necessary for us to go to Saddam?"

Militant Islam has virtually no politically significant presence in Qatar, unlike its prominence in the rest of the Persian Gulf. Islam is the official religion, of course, and Qataris practice it traditionally, yet tranquilly. Some have come together in diffuse Da'wa, or missionary, groups. Others, primarily conservative expatriate clerics, are sympathetic to Osama bin Laden. (Until he withdrew into the mountains of Afghanistan, in 1999, he was, from time to time, a guest at a villa on Doha's beach.) Those who have come together in various mosque groups—they are called Da'waists or "traditionalists"—oppose the new reforms, and their activities (democracy notwithstanding) are closely monitored by Sheikh Hamad's intelligence service and police. Their ranks include large numbers of civil servants, and members of the ruling family, among them Sheikh Hamad's second son, Fahd. One religious conservative who complained about the Emir's reforms—an academic named Abdul Rahman al-Nuaimi—was arrested by the government in 1998 and is still in custody.

"Qatar's not a really fertile ground for radical Islamist groups," a Western diplomat told me. "But there are a lot of militant Islamists who come and go, and the Qataris give a lot of money to Islamic causes outside—in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Kosovo. Representatives from those places can come here and pass a box around the mosque and leave with a lot of cash. There is also a significant amount of money going through Qatari banks. The government is attempting to control this activity. But there is concern that much of the money is laundered here."

According to Dr. Yusif al-Karadawi, an Egyptian expatriate in Doha who is one of the most respected clerics in the Persian Gulf, much of the Da'waists' opposition to Sheikh Hamad's reforms is misplaced. "There is nothing in the Koran which says that a woman can't stand for election, drive a car, get a Ph.D.," he told me. "These people who want to stay frozen in time, who see everything as *haraam*"—forbidden—"are mixing up tradition and custom with Islam. Women who wear the *batula*"—face mask—"do it because it's a Bedouin custom. The danger lies—and this is where the Islamists and the traditionalists share common ground—in the growing presence of the United States military, not just in Qatar but across the Gulf. You have given money and weapons to Israel at our expense! And everywhere your military goes it has insisted on alcohol, night clubs, discos, and bars. And, in Islam, these things are all very definitely *haraam*."

This summer, Qatar became the principal staging area for American ground forces in the Gulf, with the completion of an enormous Pentagon-financed military facility in the eastern desert. It is the American Army Central Command's largest pre-positioning facility outside the continental United States, and was placed on the highest level of alert after the recent terrorist attack on the United States destroyer Cole, in Yemen.

I visited the facility, situated an hour or so out of Doha, while its final completion was under way. There was nothing, not even a United States flag, to announce the American presence. Only after I had passed through a towering wall, protected by .50-calibre machine guns, did I come face to face with rows of dun-colored warehouses, constructed to house equipment for the nearly eleven thousand men who will make up an armored brigade and a division base. Already in place were more than a hundred and fifty tanks, a hundred and sixteen Bradley fighting vehicles, and a hundred and twelve armored personnel carriers. The presence of this weaponry in the Gulf is expected to cut the response time for American troop deployment from the United States from four weeks—as it was at the time of the Gulf War—to four days.

The new facility is only one element of the Pentagon's presence in Qatar. Some thirty miles away is Camp Snoopy, from which United States military aircraft are sometimes deployed. And the Clinton Administration is currently negotiating with the Emir's government for the possible headquartering here of the U.S. Special Operations Command. Deep in the desert, toward the Saudi frontier, is the al-Udeid Air Base, a Qatari facility that Sheikh Hamad built at a cost of more than a billion dollars. Its runway measures fifteen thousand feet, and is the longest in the Gulf; its shelters will be able to accommodate nearly a hundred aircraft—far more than are needed by the Qatari Air Force, which has only twelve fighter planes.

When I asked one of Sheikh Hamad's top advisers why the Emir was doing all this, he replied, "His national-security strategy, simply put, is that he wants to make himself crucial to the American presence in the Gulf. What do we get in exchange? We don't need to spend a lot of money on defense, we'll be attractive to American businessmen, and we'll get international status and prestige."

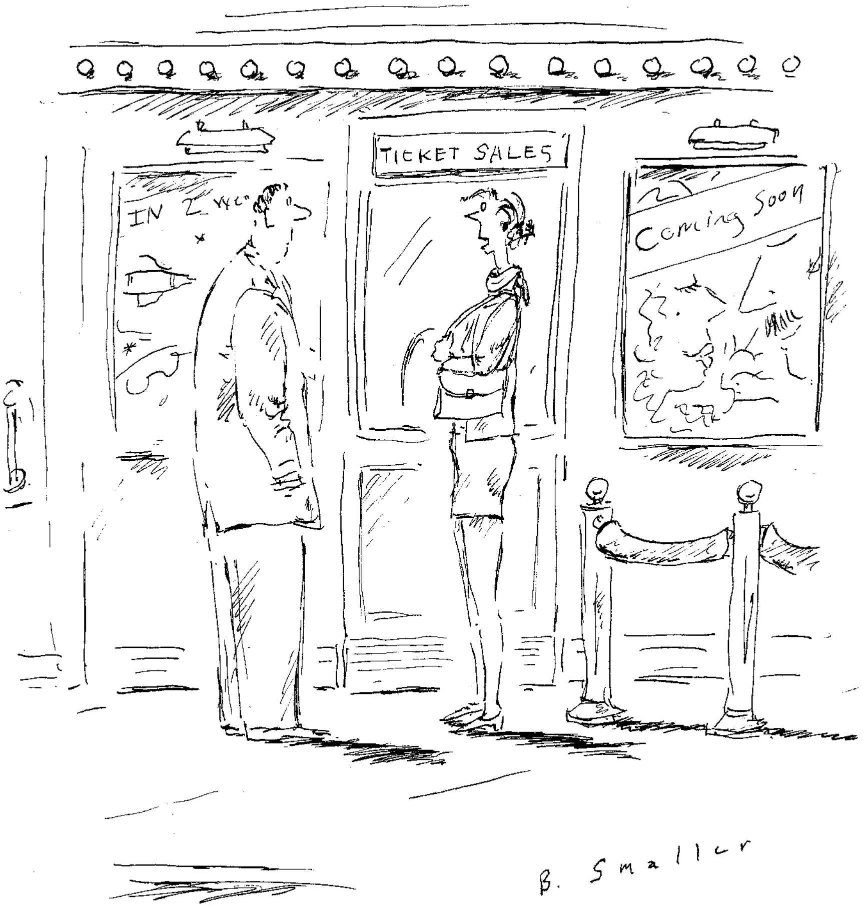
I heard a different view from Dr. Muhammad al-Musfir, an American-educated professor of political science at Qatar University. "The United States presence is dangerous," he said. "It's a very provocative element for those we call 'fundamentalists.' These people have no reason or cause to argue except—and this is a big except—for the American presence. What they're teaching is that the presence of foreigners will damage our religion, our culture, our society. Sheikh Hamad has now permitted Qatar's first church to be built, and this has spread like wildfire through the Da'waist groups. They've all begun to shriek, 'What's this—to Christianize society?' "

In my conversation with Sheikh Hamad, he had told me that Qatar's eagerness for close ties with the United States did not mean that he was in complete accord with his economic and military ally. "We've given your country its largest pre-positioning base," he said. "And we did it because America is the world's greatest democracy, not because you have a strong Army. After all, you lost the war in Vietnam. But now, with this enhanced military relationship, we really wish that the American government would speak loudly and clearly to Russia about what's happening in Chechnya. This is of concern to the entire Muslim world." Of similar concern, he went on to say, was what he perceived to be unequal treatment accorded the Palestinians and Israel in the quest for Middle East peace. (In recent weeks, as the al-Aqsa *intifada* took hold in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Emir is said to have established a fund for the Palestinian Authority that could, by some estimates, amount to a billion dollars.)

The United States has expressed its own concerns about what it perceives to be Sheikh Hamad's maverick oil policies. Despite the considerable urging of Washington—and of Saudi Arabia—Qatar has stood with the majority of OPEC states in refusing to increase oil production as a means of reducing oil prices that, on the world market, are the highest they have been in ten years. In Qatar's view, the high prices are the result of energy taxes imposed on consumers by the world's major industrial nations, and of those nations' stockpiling practices.

In a few years, Qatar could become so wealthy that it could comfortably exist without having to export any of its oil. The sheer volume of the country's gas deposits, which lie in shallow waters called the North Field, is nearly impossible to comprehend—more than three hundred and seventy trillion cubic feet, which is enough gas to meet the heating needs of all homes in the United States for sixty years. When I asked an official from the consortium Qatargas to give me other comparisons, he responded that there were none: the North Field is the single largest gas reservoir of its type in the world. At present levels—and discoveries are still being made—it can be tapped in huge quantities for at least two hundred years. The North Field has put Qatar behind only Russia and Iran in total gas reserves.

In the early nineteen-nineties, Sheikh Hamad, in his capacity as heir apparent, decided, along with the inner circle of the ruling family, to open up Qatar to international corporations, and today more than half the foreign investors here are American companies. ExxonMobil is the largest foreign shareholder in Qatar's gas enterprises, and Phillips and Occidental Petroleum have recently arrived.



"Yes, I realize that we are free agents, but I have to take on the additional risk of pregnancy and am more susceptible to certain sexually transmitted diseases, so I think you should pay for the movie."

One morning, I set off to meet the man most responsible for Qatar's gas and oil policies, Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah, who is the Minister of Energy, Industry, Electricity, and Water. An affable man with an American accent—he attended college in Michigan—he greeted me warmly in his suite on the top floor of the Q.G.P.C. building. "One of the advantages of the North Field is that all of the gas comes from a single field, as opposed to the many fields in Russia and Iran," he said. He told me that he had signed long-term contracts to supply gas to South Korea and Japan, and was now involved in negotiations with India, China, Spain, and Taiwan. His target in the coming years is to export thirty million metric tons of Qatari gas a year. "Just look at what we've accomplished," he said. "Qatar has gone from being a classic oil producer to being a totally open, diversified economy in only five years. We have developed petrochemical and fertilizer industries. At the same time, our oil reserves are still nearly four billion barrels—small by OPEC standards but enough to last us for twenty years. The road ahead is paved with gold."

The worry among some Qataris that Sheikh Hamad's reforms are happening too quickly stems, in part, from fears that a too-democratic Qatar may upset the country's delicate balance with its powerful neighbor Saudi Arabia. For, as the first al-Thani ruler had done more than a century ago, Sheikh Hamad has crafted his domestic and foreign policies with the Saudis very much in mind. In a sense, everything sprang from this: his close relationship with Washington, and Qatar's role as a front-line state; the iconoclasm of his foreign policy, which has managed to embrace Iran and Iraq as well as the United States and, to some extent, Israel, in a Gulf context; and even his opening to democracy, for he feared that Saudi Arabia's closed society and its authoritarian rule could one day provoke civil war there. But Sheikh Hamad has taken care not to stray too far from Saudi Arabia's path. Last week, as Qatar prepared to host the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the government shut down the Israeli trade office in Doha in response to Saudi threats to boycott the summit.

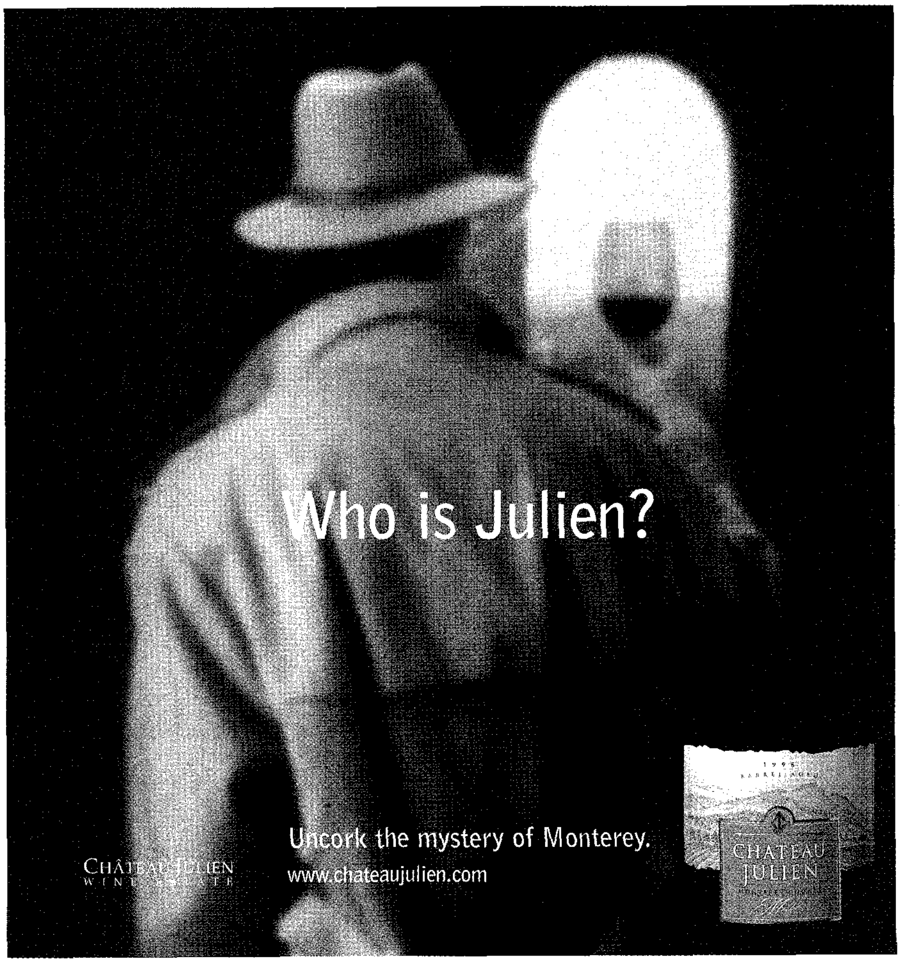
Sheikh Hamad's reforms also grew out of his desire to perpetuate the al-Thani dynasty. If he wanted one of his sons or his grandsons to assume the throne in a changing world, he had to begin sharing power. And although he is only fifty, concerns about his health—he has had two kidney transplants in the past three years—have prompted him to hasten the tutorage of his third son, Sheikh Jassim, whom Sheikh Hamad has designated as his successor. Jassim, the firstborn child of Sheikha Moza (the Emir's favorite of three wives), is twenty-two and a graduate of Sandhurst.

In the meantime, Sheikh Hamad is still negotiating with his deposed father for recognition that the changes in Qatar are irrevocable. Sheikh Khalifa, sustained by a few faithful courtiers, remains in exile, dividing his time between London and the South of France. When I asked Sheikh Hamad about the circumstances under which his father would be permitted to come back to Qatar, he smiled and said circumspectly, "I'm now discussing this with him. We will find a way."

I asked the Emir what he considered to be the greatest challenge in transforming a highly traditional, patriarchal society into a democratic one. "The challenge is to find the proper balance between the generations," he replied. "Normally, when you're young you're revolutionary, but when you start practicing life you become more mellow with time. And I never want to reach that point when my son comes to me and says, 'Hi, Dad! You're getting old. You can no longer do things properly.' "

"But that's essentially what you said to your father," I said.

"No, no," he responded. "I wasn't so reckless as to have said that. What I did was try to develop my country. I know that my time will not be that long, but I want to feel happy in the knowledge that I have put Qatar on the right path, and that those who come after me will continue, and correct the mistakes I have made. My hope is to see Qatar as a democracy before I leave; to have a well-educated generation that, in the smallest villages, can develop heavy industry. The challenge is how to build reserves so that, if the day comes when Qatar has no oil or gas, it can stand as a large nation and be proud of itself." ◆



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PROFILES

AN EXILE IN PARADISE

How Jean-Luc Godard disappeared from the headlines and into the movies.

BY RICHARD BRODY

During the 1960 Cannes Film Festival, two months after the release of "Breathless," his first feature, Jean-Luc Godard told an interviewer, "I have the impression of loving the cinema less than I did a year ago—simply because I have made a film, and the film was well received, and so forth. So I hope that my second film will be received very badly and that this will make me want to make films again." The twenty-nine-year-old director was not only daring the powers of the movie world to withdraw their approval but begging them to do so: "I prefer to work when there are people against whom I have to struggle." Godard, who will turn seventy this December, has been struggling ever since; indeed, he could hardly have anticipated the price he would pay for getting his wish.

In the history of cinema, only two other directors have made first full-length films that forever changed the art—D. W. Griffith, with "Birth of a Nation," in 1915, and Orson Welles, with "Citizen Kane," in 1941—and they, too, eventually found themselves in exile. Unlike Griffith and Welles, who fought to keep a place in the film industry and then, once excluded, tried to claw their way back in, Godard has remained productive on the margins, but at great personal sacrifice. His single-minded quest to unify his life and his work has had the extraordinary side effect of rendering him out of place in both: hyperreal and disarmingly present in his films; oracular and almost incorporeal in person.

When "Breathless" was first shown, it was an immediate critical and commercial success: no other film had been at once so connected to all that had gone before it and yet so liberating. The plot was a familiar one—a young man gone bad and on the run, the woman he loves unsure whether to run with him—but its execution was utterly new. Shot with a handheld camera in real locations, using available light, and edited with daring visual discontinuity, "Breathless" felt like a high-energy fusion of jazz and philosophy. The actors spoke in hyperbolic aphorisms that leaped from slang to Rilke, and ideas and emotions came and went in a heartbeat; the film resembled a live recording of a person thinking in real time. "Breathless" may not have been as endearing as Truffaut's "The 400 Blows," or as intellectually demanding as Alain Resnais's "Hiroshima Mon Amour," but in the years to come it inspired New Cinemas from Czechoslovakia to Brazil.

Between 1960 and 1967, Godard made fourteen feature films, including such modernist classics as "Vivre Sa Vie," "Pierrot le Fou," and "Two or Three Things I Know About Her," and in them he continued to outdo both himself and his contemporaries in stretching the limits of narrative film. As a formal innovator, as a social critic, as an unflinching confessor of hot emotions and cold truths, he became a singular figure of the sixties. Writing in *Partisan Review* in February, 1968, Susan Sontag called him one of "the great culture heroes of our time," and compared him to Picasso and Schoenberg. During Godard's 1968 speaking tour of American universities, one student said he was "as irreplaceable, for us, as Bob Dylan."

Yet by that point Godard was in a crisis of self-doubt; the pace of current events was outstripping his ability to invent new forms to engage them. In the earlier films, he had joyfully embraced the images of mass culture—magazines, advertising, pop tunes, and, above all, Hollywood movies. Now he felt repulsed by the world those images signified and fostered, with its unreflective consumerism and its support for the

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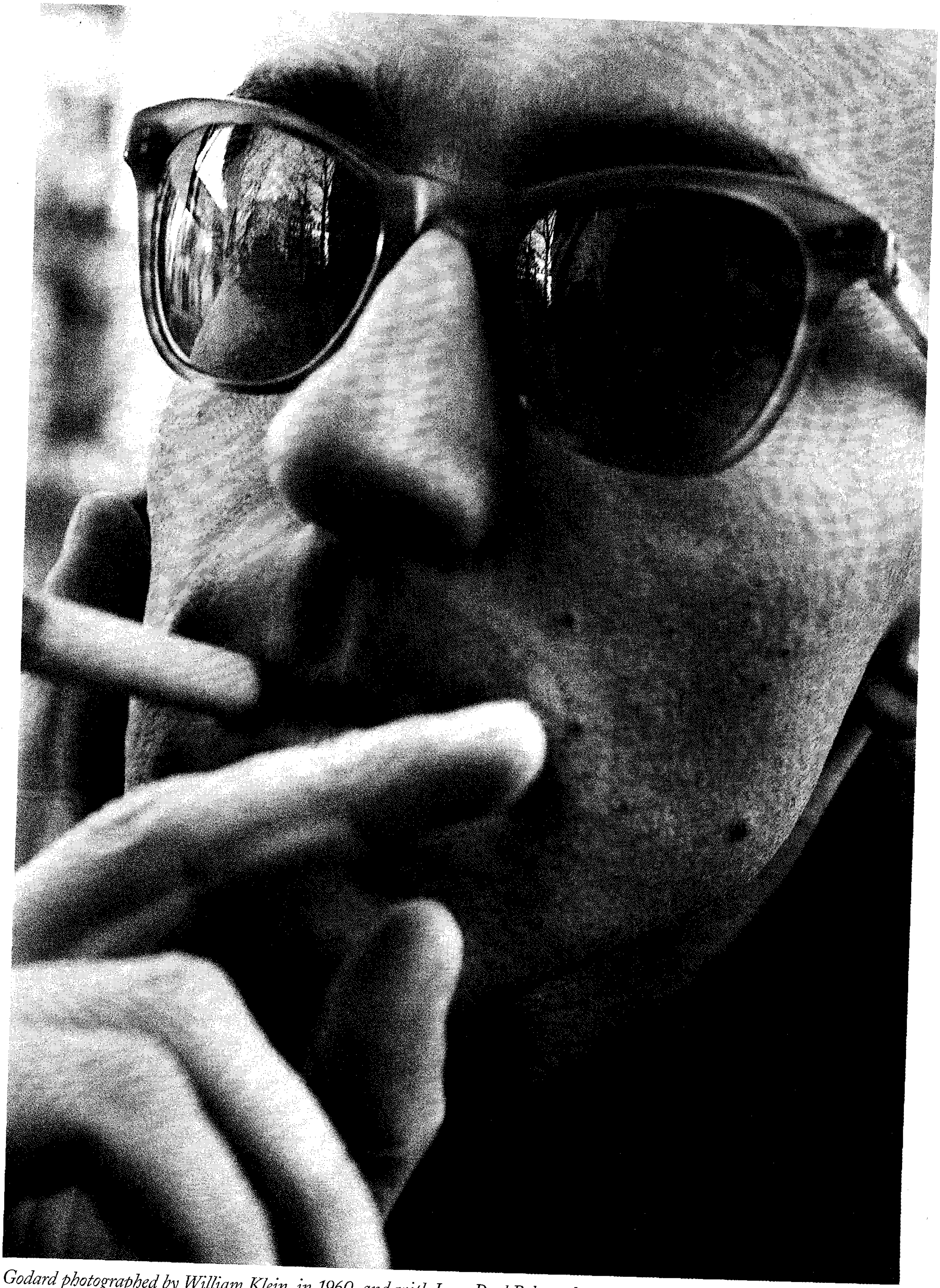
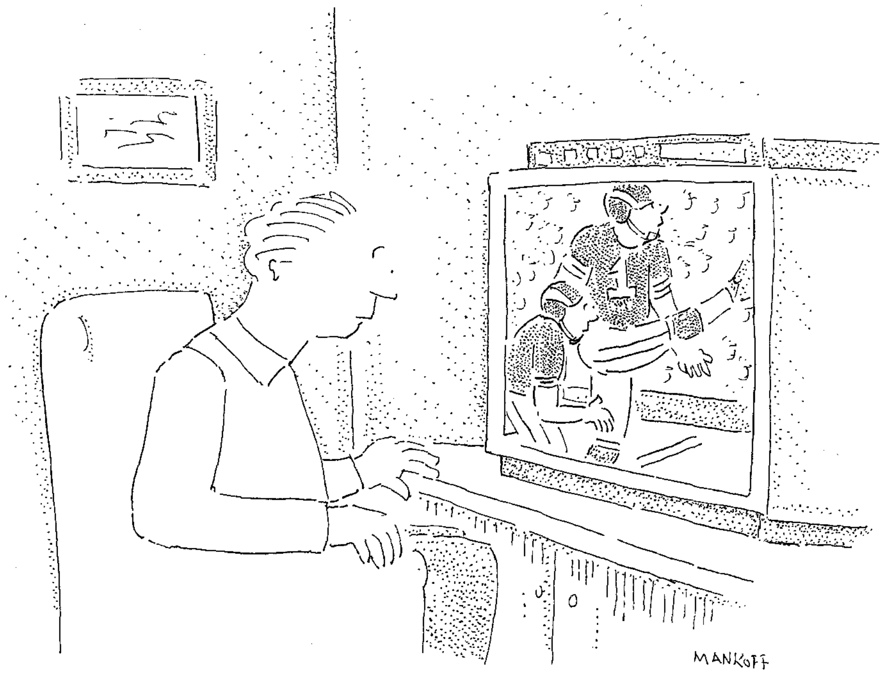


Godard photographed by William Klein, in 1960, and with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg, filming "Breathless."



"The kick is up, and it's, it's, it's too close to call!"

• •

Vietnam War. The last of this torrent of films, "Weekend"—made famous by a ten-minute tracking shot of a traffic jam (actually three distinct shots, separated by brief intertitles)—concludes with two title cards: the first reads "End of Film," the second "End of Cinema." When Godard finished "Weekend," he advised his production crew to look for work elsewhere. So began Godard's defiant withdrawal—first from the movie industry, and then from Paris. He did not make another commercial film for more than a decade.

The films that Godard has made since his return to the movie business, in 1979, are arguably deeper, more technically accomplished, and more daring than the early ones. But they are also far more fragmented in form and rarefied in content, at a time when Hollywood has accustomed even sophisticated viewers to simpler films. This unhappy coincidence, combined with the changed economics of the industry, has made it impossible for any but the most assiduous American fans to keep up with Godard's work of the past twenty years. The last time a Godard film received a regular commercial release in a first-run theatre in New York was in 1988, when "King Lear" played for three weeks at the Quad Cinema. According to *Variety*, it took in $61,821 at the box office in all of North America. It is currently unavailable on home video or DVD. The loss is tragic: it's as if American museums and galleries were to show nothing of Picasso after Cubism.

When I mentioned to some friends that I was going to Switzerland to visit Godard, they were taken aback: they had assumed he was dead. In Godard's futuristic film "Alphaville" (1965), the hero, Lemmy Caution, Secret Agent 003, is warned that as a romantic individualist he is out of date and doomed. "You will suffer something worse than death," he is told. "You will become a legend." This prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of Jean-Luc Godard.

Godard works out of the basement of a modern low-rise residential building in Rolle, the town in Switzerland where he and his partner, Anne-Marie Miéville, have lived since 1978. Godard maintains that the town is outside one of the defining loops of modern life. "Here in Rolle," he says, "you can't get a package from Federal Express."

I asked him why not.

"Because he comes by. I'm never in. He leaves word: 'Call us.' So, I don't call."

Rolle, set on a hillside by the shores of Lake Geneva, is in timeless harmony with its natural setting. Across the street from the hotel where I was staying was a thirteenth-century castle perched on the banks of the vast, jewel-bright lake. A hundred yards out, a small island with domes of dense foliage pierced by a proud, solemn obelisk resembled a Fragonard come to life; Mont Blanc hovered weightlessly in the distance.

When I arrived at Godard's office, I could see the filmmaker through a glass door, seated at a broad, uncluttered trestle desk. He was talking on the phone as he waved me in, past one wall of compact disks and another of books and pictures. He sat facing a roomful of video equipment that could stock a small TV station, including a television monitor showing the semifinals of the French Open. (He is an enthusiastic tennis player, and ranks himself "ten-millionth in the world.")

Godard was wearing black pants, black sandals, and a white T-shirt with a discreet Nike swoosh over the left breast. His hair was sparse and gray, and his face was spiky with white stubble. After several gentle *politesses* into the phone, he hung up and greeted me. He said that he and Miéville had long admired *The New Yorker's* cartoons, and that they had clipped one that exemplified their own situation: a unicorn wearing a suit is seated at a desk and talking on the phone, with a caption reading, "These rumors of my nonexistence are making it very difficult for me to obtain financing."

I began by asking him about his most recently released feature film, "For Ever Mozart," from 1996, a bitter fantasy about art and mourning. In it, three young French people with lofty ideas but idle hands take off for Sarajevo to put on a play and are killed in Bosnia by paramilitary thugs. One of the victims is the daughter of an old French director who has been stalled in his work; in his grief, he finds the will to create.

Typically, Godard was not satisfied with the film. "It wasn't very good," he said. "The actors aren't good enough, and things remained too theoretical." Godard's complaint about his movie led to a complaint about young actors today: that even unknowns, inundated with media hype, comport themselves like stars and are "less available" to direction: "They think they know what to do, by the fact that they've been chosen. They have no doubt. Doubt no longer exists today. With digital, doubt no longer exists."

This abrupt switch from the sociological to the technological is typical of Godard's conversation: his sentences, like his films, are always soaring into abstractions, or breaking off, pivoting on an instant of silence to change direction. "With digital, there is no past," he continued. "I'm reluctant to edit on these new so-called 'virtual' machines, these digital things, because, as far as I'm concerned, there's no past. In other words, if you want to see the previous shot, O.K., you do this"—he tapped the table like a button—"and you see it at once. It doesn't take any time to get there, the time to unspool in reverse, the time to go backward. You're there right away. So there's an entire time that no longer exists, that has been suppressed. And that's why films are much more mediocre, because time no longer exists."

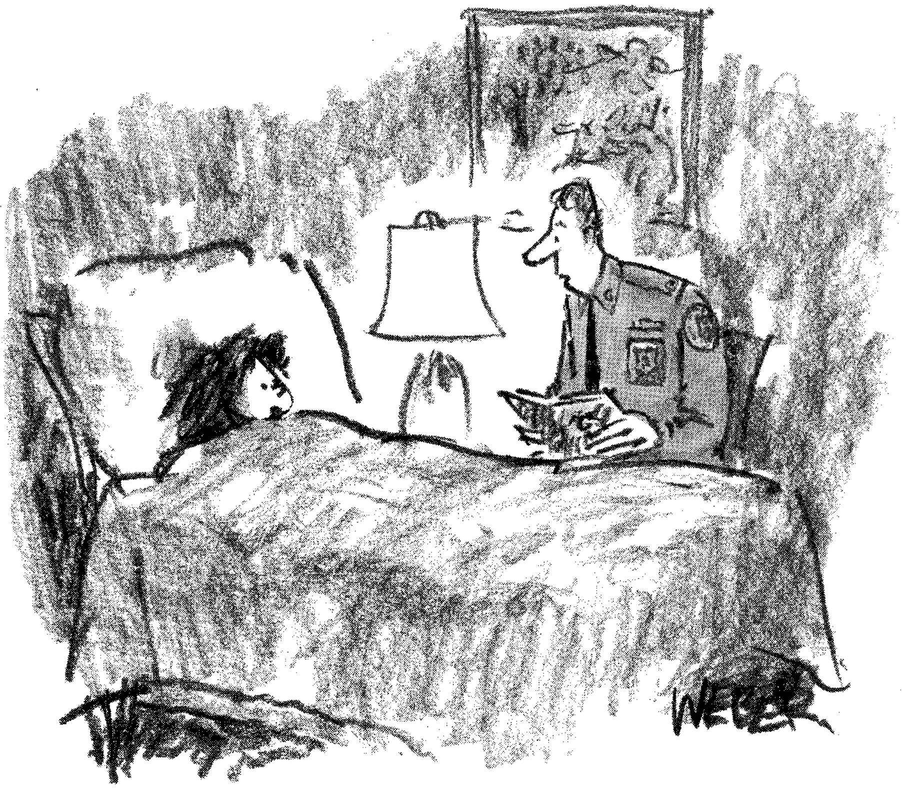
Godard is deeply involved with the past, and with the challenges of representing it on film. His new film, "In Praise of Love," which he is still editing, concerns an elderly French couple in Brittany who are former heroes of the Resistance, and whose life story Steven Spielberg has offered to buy, and the family argument that ensues over whether the offer should be accepted. Spielberg's presumption to historical authority is one of Godard's pet peeves. When, in 1995, Godard turned down an invitation to receive an honorary award from the New York Film Critics Circle, he wrote to its chairman declaring himself unworthy of the honor because of his failure to accomplish several things—foremost, "to prevent Mr. Spielberg from reconstructing Auschwitz."

Spielberg wants "to dominate the world," Godard charged in 1995, "by the fact of wanting to please before finding truth or knowledge. Spielberg, like many others, wants to convince before he discusses. In that, there is something very totalitarian." Now, in his office, Godard advanced that argument with an allusion to "Saving Private Ryan," connecting the Normandy invasion to the invasion by American cinema. "To my mind, I think that's even the reason why the Americans landed, it's for the American film, and now it's happened." After all, he continued, "when Nixon signed a contract with China, the first thing is always the films. Cheese, airplanes—that comes later."

Like many contemporary French thinkers, Godard believes that France is enduring an American cultural occupation as significant as the German occupation during the Second World War, and equally hard to resist. He told me about a film he had been close to making that fell through, called "Conversations with Dmitri." It was about the French film industry under a hypothetical Soviet occupation, and he intended it to be a comment on "the American cultural occupation, the German occupation, all occupations."

Godard lays much of the blame for what he perceives as the loss of the past, the failure of cultural memory, on the present-day American occupation. He complained to me that the young, media-savvy actors in "For Ever Mozart" didn't recognize actors from twenty years ago, and suggested, as a corrective, that television should show "only the past, nothing of the present, not even the weather." He continued, "They should give the weather from twenty years ago. Tennis matches from twenty years ago, not today. But what's happening today, well, our children will see in twenty years. There's no hurry—twenty years."

On the subject of his own past, Godard has relatively little to say, and he has reproached interviewers for dwelling on it. As a child, he was something of a loner, yet he was anything but alone; in fact, he had the kind of refined, close-knit family that one can spend a lifetime trying to escape. Born in Paris, on December 3, 1930, the second of four children, Jean-Luc Godard had a privileged and sheltered childhood. His father, Paul-Jean Godard, was a French-born doctor who became a Swiss citizen; his mother, born Odile Monod, was the daughter of extremely wealthy French bankers. Both were Protestant, and both were literary. Godard credits his father for his taste for German Romanticism and his mother for his love of novels. He spent his childhood reading, skiing, and travelling among his family's various estates, on both the French and Swiss sides of Lake Geneva. When the Second World War began, Godard was in school in Paris, but he was soon sent back to his family in Switzerland, and



"Again? I read you your Miranda rights last night."

he stayed there until the end of the war.

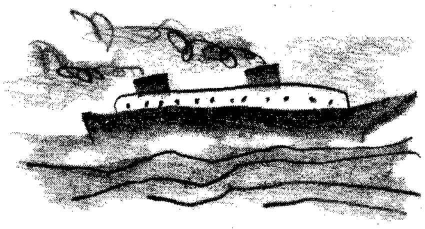
After the Liberation, Godard returned to school in Paris, and in the late nineteen-forties he discovered the Cinémathèque Française. Founded by the young silent-film buff Henri Langlois in 1935, the Cinémathèque included both a collection of films that Langlois had rescued and preserved (at a time when old films were routinely destroyed) and a small screening room where he could show them. It was not the first film museum, but it was the best: Langlois's catholic taste (which ranged from surrealist fantasies to B Westerns) made the Cinémathèque the hub of postwar French movie culture. There Godard and two other faithfuls of the front row—François Truffaut and Jacques Rivette—eventually introduced themselves. The three young devotees soon met two others, a pharmacy student named Claude Chabrol and a man ten years their senior, Maurice Scherer, now known as Eric Rohmer. Godard's interest in film quickly grew into an obsession, fuelled by enthusiastic all-night discussions with his new friends while wandering the streets of Paris. To placate his parents, he enrolled at the Sorbonne as a student in ethnology, but he spent all his time at the movies—sometimes watching three films a day, sometimes watching one film (Orson Welles's "Macbeth," for example) three times in a row, and sometimes, according to Truffaut, watching "fifteen minutes of five different films in one afternoon."

At the same time, Godard was doing his best to keep up with his reading: Truffaut reported that his friend would go to people's apartments and read the first and last pages of forty books. Indeed, Godard had originally wanted to be a novelist, but he felt "crushed by the spectre of the great writers." Then he discovered "other poets," in the cinema: "I saw a film of Jean Vigo, a film of Renoir, and then I said to myself, I think that I could do that too, me too."

During our interview, Godard referred to the New Wave not only as "liberating" but also as "conservative." On the one hand, he and his friends saw themselves as a resistance movement against "the occupation of the cinema by people who had no business there." On the other, this movement had been born in a museum, the Cinémathèque: Godard and his peers were steeping themselves in a cinematic tradition—that of silent films—that had disappeared almost everywhere else. Thus, from the beginning, Godard saw the cinema as a lost paradise that had to be reclaimed.

In 1950, Godard published several articles in a short-lived film magazine edited by Rohmer. Then, in 1952, he began to write for a new, intensely serious magazine, co-founded by the legendary film theorist André Bazin: *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Even his earliest articles displayed the motifs of his future film career: a love for classic American movies, political films, and documentaries; a taste for grandiose speculation and fine phrases; and a conflation of his idea of cinema and his idea of himself. More important, he used his dazzling polymathy to explode the old hierarchies: Hitchcock and Hawks were as great as Eisenstein and Renoir; Eisenstein and Renoir were as great as Voltaire and Cézanne. Godard was already imagining movies that would bring together the commercial cinema, the art cinema, and the whole of Western culture in one madly ambitious body of work—his own.

Godard may have been hatching big plans, but, from his parents' perspective, he was still living like a spoiled adolescent. In 1952, hoping to thrust responsibility on him, they cut him off financially. Unable to support himself with his film criticism, Godard began stealing—from family members, from friends of the family, from the offices of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. His mother managed to find him a job with Swiss television, but he stole from his employers and got caught. His father bailed him out of jail and put him in a mental hospital. (These events are strikingly reminiscent of Truffaut's ordeal in the late nineteen-forties, when he stole a typewriter from his father's office to finance the creation of his own *ciné-club* and his father committed him to a psychiatric "observation center.") After this incident, Godard says, he severed his ties with his family for good.



Shortly afterward, in 1954, Godard went to work on a dam in Switzerland. "I said to myself, 'I'll put some money aside, and in two or three years I'll come back to Paris. I'll manage to make my first film by age twenty-five.' That's the goal that Orson Welles had set." Instead, he rented a camera on his days off, hired a crew, and made a short documentary about the construction of the dam. He then sold it to the construction company and returned to Paris, where he was able to scrape by on the film's profits for several years. Eric Rohmer has written of that period, "Whenever people asked us, 'What do you live on?' we liked to answer, 'We don't live.' Life was the screen, life was the cinema."

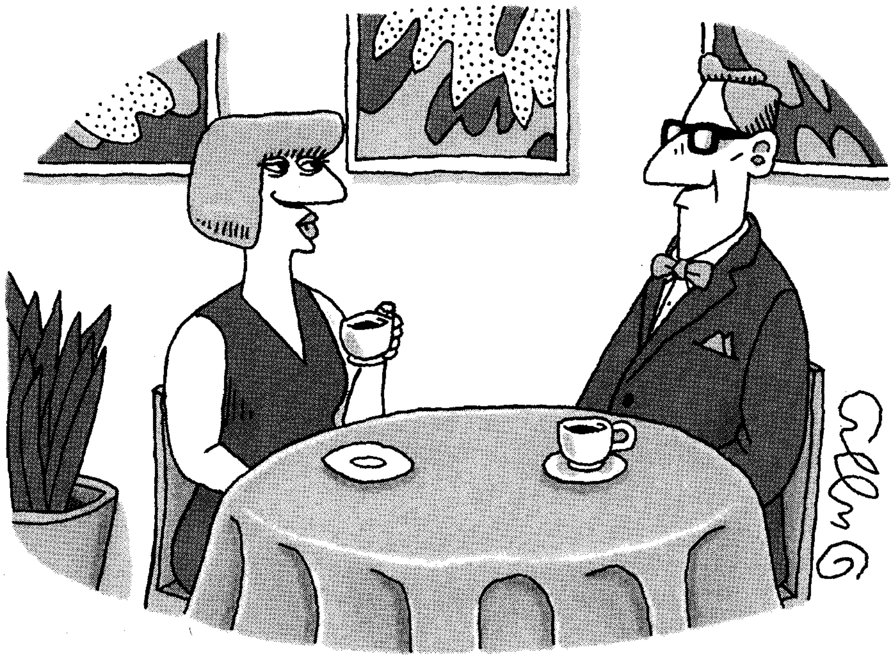
In Paris, Godard resumed his critical writing for *Cahiers du Cinéma* and other journals, made several short films, and took a job as the press agent for the Paris office of Twentieth Century Fox. After a screening there of a film by the French producer Georges de Beauregard, Godard told him, "Your film is shit." This unusual introduction earned Godard an acquaintance that soon proved fruitful: in 1959, following the success of Truffaut's "The 400 Blows," Beauregard agreed to produce Godard's first feature film, on the strength of a story outline written by Truffaut.

From the beginning of his career, Godard crammed more film references into his movies than any of his New Wave comrades. In "Breathless," his citations include a movie poster showing Humphrey Bogart (whose expression the lead actor Jean-Paul Belmondo tries reverently to imitate); a clip from the soundtrack of the classic film noir "Gun Crazy"; visual quotations from films of Ingmar Bergman, Samuel Fuller, Fritz Lang, and others; and an onscreen dedication to Monogram Pictures, an American B-movie studio. Most of all, the choice of Jean Seberg as the lead actress was an overarching reference to Otto Preminger, who had discovered her for his "Saint Joan," and then cast her in his acidulous 1958 adaptation of "Bonjour Tristesse." If, in Rohmer's words, "life was the cinema," then a film filled with movie references was supremely autobiographical.

"Breathless" was the first film to make explicit its relation to the history of cinema, and serious critics and viewers appreciated it as such. Yet the wider audience saw it as a gangster movie, and enjoyed the escapist fantasy—a response that took Godard by surprise. In an interview several years after its release, he said, "Now I see where it belongs—along with 'Alice in Wonderland.' I thought it was 'Scarface.' " The offhandedly self-righteous thug of "Breathless" was not the scarred sociopath of the real underworld (as he had been in Truffaut's original conception); he was a character without psychology, a collection of self-consciously cool gestures copied from the movies.

The offhand behavior of Belmondo's character was mirrored in Godard's approach to film technique. Like an action painter, he discovered a working method that exalted the inspiration of the moment; in fact, the way the shoot was organized was arguably Godard's greatest innovation. He had his cameraman, Raoul Coutard, shoot with a handheld camera and scant lighting, partly for aesthetic reasons and partly to save money but mostly to save time. "Three-quarters of directors waste four hours on a shot that requires five minutes of actual directing," Godard told an interviewer. "I prefer to have five minutes' work for the crew—and keep the three hours to myself for thought." He needed time for himself because he made "Breathless" without a storyboard—indeed, without a script. He and his minimal crew usually shot only in the morning, giving the director the rest of the day to come up with what to do next; when he couldn't come up with anything, they would skip a day of shooting altogether. Jean Seberg, who was used to Hollywood methods, considered quitting after the first day. Two weeks into filming (and not filming), Beauregard thought that Godard was simply wasting money, and threatened to shut down the production, but Truffaut intervened.

In an interview a few years later, Godard was even more explicit about his search for "the definitive by chance": "As I make low-budget films, I can ask the producer for a five-week schedule, knowing there will be two weeks of actual shooting. 'Vivre Sa Vie' took four weeks, but shooting stopped during the whole second week. The big difficulty is that I need people who can be at my disposal the whole time. Sometimes they have to wait a whole day before I can tell them what I want them to do. I have to ask them not to leave the location in case we start shooting again. Of course, they don't like it."



"No, I don't want to change you, Darryl. But, sure, it would be great if you were completely different."

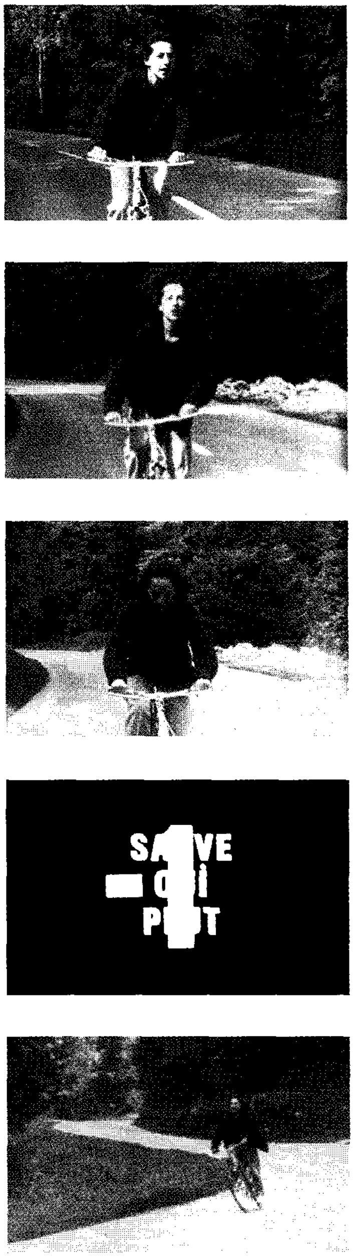
• •

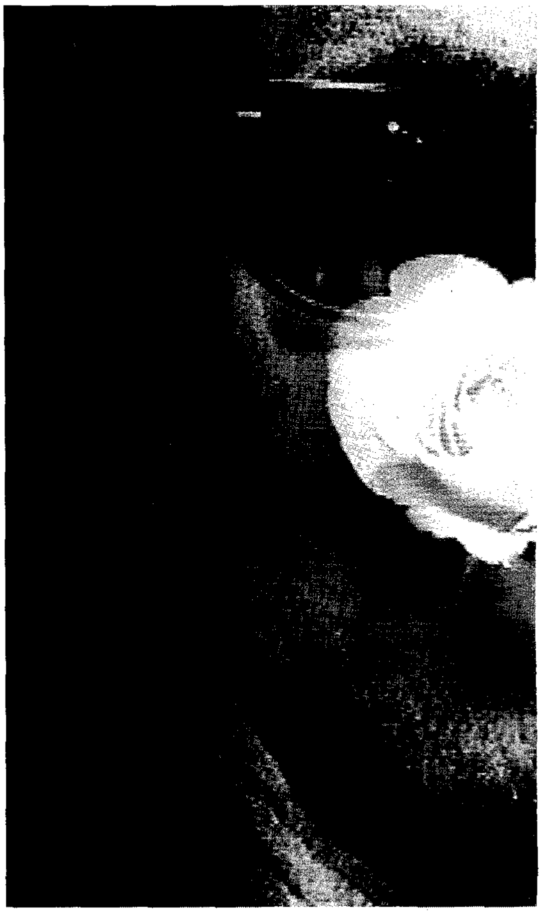
In 1960, a young model ignored a telegram from Godard offering her the lead female role in a film he was making. He had noticed her the year before in a soap commercial and had offered her a small part in "Breathless," which she had refused, because it entailed appearing topless. This time, her friends pushed her to respond. She went to see Godard in his producer's office, in Paris: "He walked around me three times. He looked me over from head to toe and said, 'It's a deal. Come sign your contract tomorrow.' I asked him, haltingly, what the film was about. He answered that there was no script, that it had to do with politics." The actress, Anna Karina, was not yet twenty-one, and Godard had to fly her mother in from Denmark to sign on her behalf.

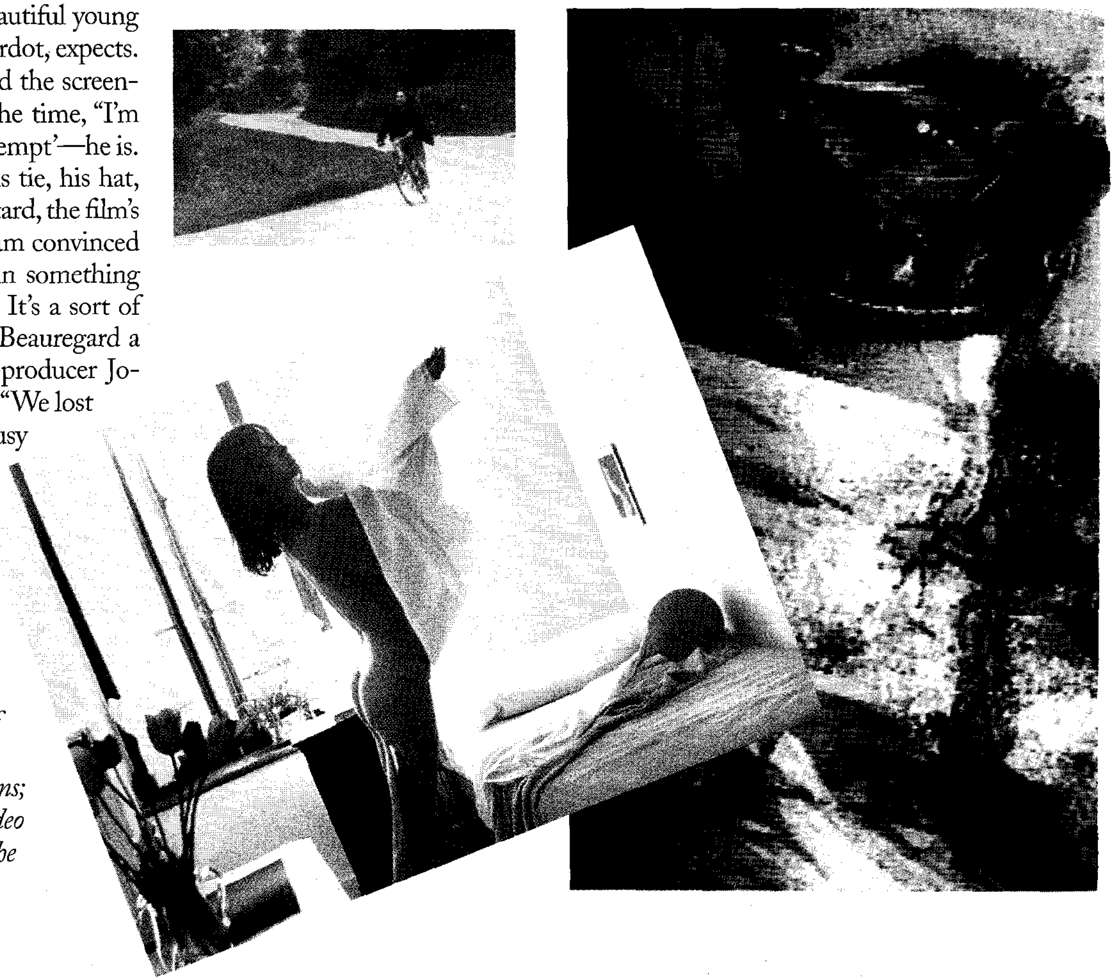
The film, "Le Petit Soldat," opens with the lines "The time for action is over. I have aged. The time for thought is beginning." A painfully personal love story set in the context of the French government's dirty war against Algerian independence fighters and their French sympathizers, the film shows both sides engaging in assassination and torture. As Godard had hoped, it was received badly. The left protested privately; the French government banned the film, blocking its release at home and abroad. "But since I had received death threats in my mailbox," Godard said, "I was glad it was banned." Godard, who had called "Breathless" "a documentary on Jean Seberg and on Jean-Paul Belmondo," here took that notion a step further, asking Anna Karina questions on camera and filming her unscripted answers, a method he expanded and refined in films to come.

Godard and Anna Karina married in 1961. She starred in many of his subsequent films, including "A Woman Is a Woman," "Vivre Sa Vie," "Alphaville," and "Pierrot le Fou," which used various American movie genres—science fiction, melodrama, romance, the musical—to frame collages of sociology, philosophy, poetry, politics, and outright caprice. The director and his star made a glamorous pair in those years, cruising around Paris in their big Ford, but the marriage was tempestuous. Godard would often disappear; later, Karina would learn that he had been out of the country. As she put it, "He told me, 'I'm going out for a pack of corn-paper cigarettes,' and he came back three weeks later." In 1964, Jacques Rivette, who had just directed Karina in a stage adaptation of Diderot's "La Religieuse" (which Godard financed), told a journalist, "He and his wife have achieved perfect harmony in destroying each other." The screenwriter Paul Gégauff described paying a visit to the couple, only to find Godard "stark naked" in a freezing-cold room that had been totally destroyed: "All his clothes and Anna's were lying on the ground in tatters, the sleeves slashed with a razor, in a mess of wine and broken glass. . . . I noticed Anna on a sort of dais in the far corner of the room, also quite naked. . . . 'I'd offer you a glass of something,' he said, 'only there aren't any glasses left.' Then: 'Go and buy us a couple of raincoats so that we can go out.' "

Godard thought that Karina was disappointed by the increasingly intellectual path that his film career was taking; he said that "what she really dreamed of was to go to Hollywood." In "Contempt" (1963), a screenwriter accepts an assignment he despises in order to pay for luxuries that he thinks his beautiful young wife, played by Brigitte Bardot, expects. Michel Piccoli, who played the screenwriter, told a reporter at the time, "I'm not the male lead of 'Contempt'—he is. He wanted me to wear his tie, his hat, and his shoes." Raoul Coutard, the film's cinematographer, said, "I am convinced that he is trying to explain something to his wife in 'Contempt.' It's a sort of letter—one that's costing Beauregard a million dollars." (The co-producer Joseph E. Levine concurred: "We lost a million bucks on that lousy film, because that *great* director Jean-Luc Godard refused to follow the script.") Years later, Godard said of Karina,

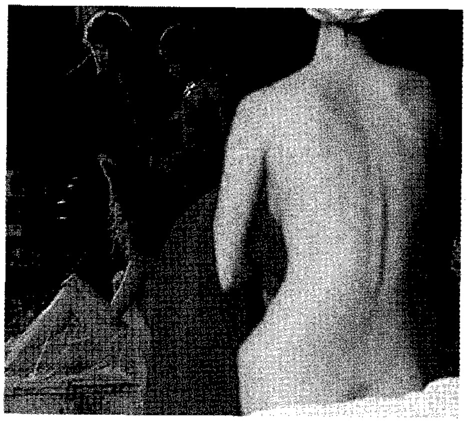




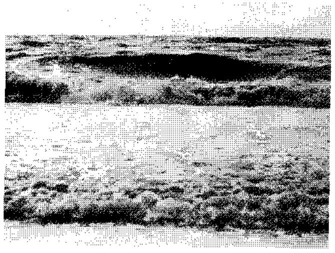


Godard, opposite page center, with his first wife, Anna Karina, on the set of "A Woman Is a Woman" (1961); scenes from later films; and from the eight-part video series on the cinema which he completed in 1998.

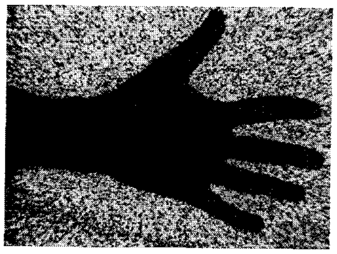
LEFT: "SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE)" (5); "HAIL MARY"/PHOTOFEST. CENTER AND TEXT: "HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA" (GAUMONT, 1998). RIGHT: "PASSION"; "PRÉNOM CARMEN" (3); © RAYMOND CAUCHETIER; "KING LEAR"/PHOTOFEST.



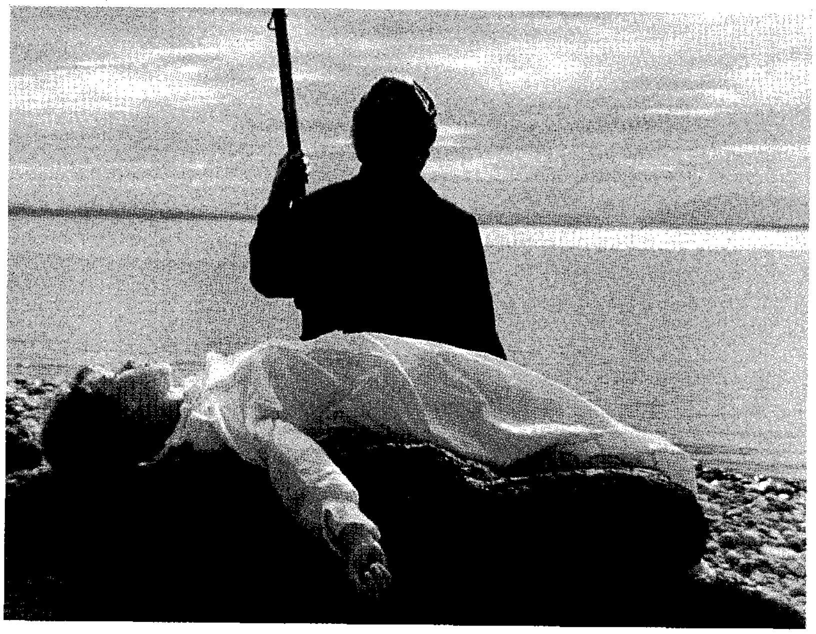
qu'il reçût une fleur
comme preuve
de son passage
et qu'à son réveil
il trouvât
cette fleur
dans ses mains



HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA



NAISSANCE DU CINÉMA



"She left me because of my many faults; I left her because I couldn't talk movies with her." Karina's assessment was slightly different: "As soon as we were happy, he tried to get at us by another means, another path. He provoked a new ordeal. One could have thought that it bored him, happiness." The couple divorced in 1965.

Shortly afterward, Godard made "Masculine Feminine." Though its twenty-year-old characters—"the children of Marx and Coca-Cola"—were from a different world than the thirty-five-year-old director, the film explores the same conflicts between intellect and desire that fuelled "Contempt." In "Waiting for Godard," Michel Vianey's book about the making of "Masculine Feminine," Godard told the writer that finding a woman he was attracted to and could talk to would be ideal, "like having the city in the country."

TESTAMENT: VERMEER IN DECEMBER

To my daughter, Elsbeth, two loaf-sized secret coffers.
To my sons, the pastel seascape.
And the peat chest. And the Spanish chairs, perhaps.
And the ivory-capped cane at rest on my bedstead.
And the sheets, and the ear cushions,

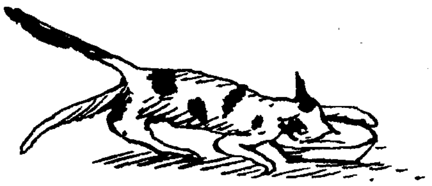
and the seventeen pocket handkerchiefs
that flap at the summons of each dawn's catarrh.
Now and then, through their linen expanse
I revisit my children, in flight down an iced stream,
their sail-pushed sleds clicking, clicking
like a covey of walnut carts. . . .

To my servants, "Bass Viol with Skull."
The wicker cradle. The ash-gray travel mantle.
To the men who will carry my coffin,
glass flasks—six—and a marbled flute

carved from the wing bone of a mute swan.
Its music may offer a tremoloed solace
as they lift from the grave site my infant son.
Two years in the earth, his wooden box, darkened

Godard's next romantic liaison seemed closer to that ideal, but it precipitated his withdrawal from the film industry, and set the hard terms of his self-exile. Anne Wiazemsky was the granddaughter of the French writer François Mauriac, and the lead actress in Robert Bresson's "Au Hasard Balthazar." She and Godard first met after a screening of the rushes, and later, after seeing "Masculine Feminine," she wrote him a letter. At the time, Wiazemsky was a student at Nanterre University, a nexus of leftist activity. Through his acquaintance with her friends there, Godard conceived "La Chinoise" (1967), a film about a cell of young Parisian Maoists who, from the comfort of a borrowed apartment, plot their first terrorist act. The film, which starred Wiazemsky, is also an unromantic love story, involving her character and another cell member. "La Chinoise" was made a year before the legendary student uprisings, and is widely held to be prescient. That summer, Godard married Wiazemsky, who had just turned twenty; later that year, he made "Weekend."

When Godard abandoned the movie industry, in 1968, he was fleeing not just a set of narrative conventions, his own public image, and his newfound cinema "family" but also the entrenched customs of movie production. It was no coincidence that the alternative structure he embraced, a doctrinaire Marxism or Maoism, purported to grant workers control of the means of production and to promote collaborative work—in fact, Godard co-founded a Marxist cinema collective the following year. But one scene in "La Chinoise" suggests the inner price of Godard's doctrinaire ideological allegiance: the hero stands at a blackboard that is covered with the names of famous writers and artists, and erases them one by one, until only the name "Brecht" remains. For a stupendous reader and artistic omnivore like Godard, the scene is the equivalent of intellectual suicide. Describing this period many years later, he told an interviewer, "I didn't read, I didn't go to movies, I didn't listen to music," and added, citing Rohmer, " 'In those years I wasn't alive.' " Ultimately, the reductivism and hortatory optimism of Maoism proved too much. In his semi-apologetic 1972 "Tout Va Bien," Godard presents Yves Montand as a director who left the cinema in 1968, in a moment of doubt, and has been making TV commercials for a living: Godard was making commercials, but for a political product, and he, too, was looking for a way out. By the time the movie appeared, he and Wiazemsky had separated.



When I met Michel Vianey in Paris recently, I reminded him of Godard's quest for a woman he could talk to, and he replied, "Well, he's found her." Godard's thirty-year partnership with Anne-Marie Miéville is a testament to his ongoing attempts to unify filmmaking and domestic life. He first worked with Miéville in 1970, on a film project about Palestinians, and Miéville was closely involved in Godard's rehabilitation after a severe motorcycle accident the following year. In 1973, the couple left Paris for Grenoble, where they put together their own video studio; there they could control productions from start to finish, and incorporate filmmaking into their daily lives. A few years later, they increased their isolation by moving to Rolle.

Between 1974 and 1978, Godard and Miéville collaborated on three films and two video series, all of which are

by marl and a bleeding silt, will ride
my greater other like a black topknot
as we are lowered in tandem down the candlelit walls.

To my wife, the yellow jacket, silk and fur-trimmed,
that warms, through the mirror of a linseed wash,
a hazel-haired woman eternally lit by a pearl necklace.
She carries, with a dabble of madder and burnt ochre,
the wistful, enigmatic gaze of my children

as they circled the pale flute, dreaming, they said, of some
haunted voice, deep in a gliding wing, its song
both shrill and melodic,
like the cry of an infant controlled by a choir.

And to you, in half rings around me, your faces
spaced like pearls . . . Imagine that moment
when the ropes are lowered and something begins
on the lit walls, shape over shape: I leave it to you,
that shadowed conjunction of matter and light
that flies, in its fashion, between us.

—*Linda Bierds*

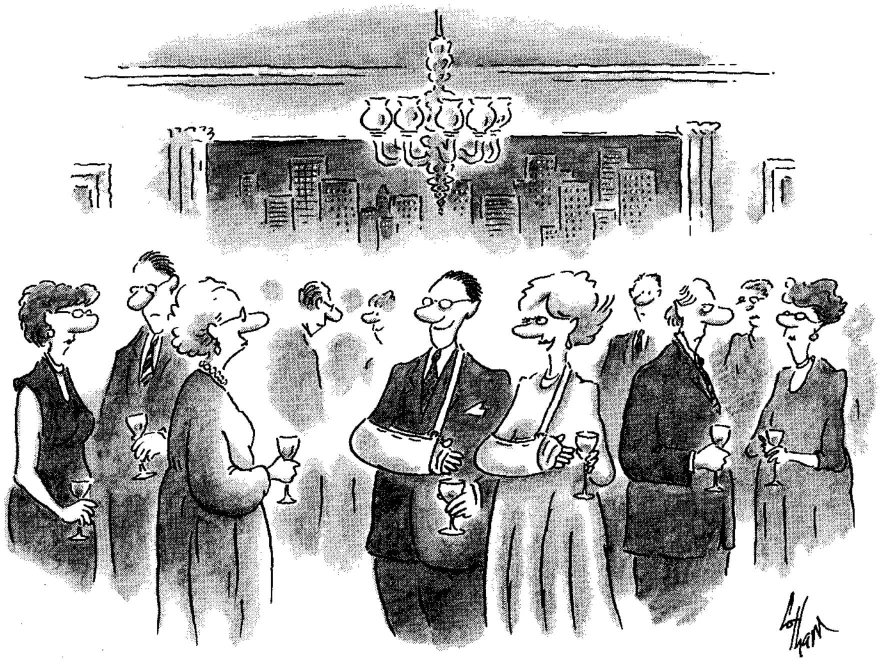
experimental in the best sense of the word—filled with raw thought and technical innovations—and which served Godard as a laboratory of ideas during the decades that followed. In the late seventies, Miéville coaxed Godard to reconnect with the mainstream film industry in order to make “Every Man for Himself”—but he did it on his own terms. He soon began to refer to “Every Man for Himself,” which was co-written by Miéville, as his “second first film.” Part of the film, at least, was startlingly autobiographical: Jacques Dutronc plays a filmmaker (named Paul Godard) who uneasily follows his girlfriend, also a filmmaker (played by Nathalie Baye), to a new life in the Swiss countryside. As if to confirm the film’s role in reëstablishing him in the cinema, Godard says that “Every Man for Himself” was his only commercial success besides “Breathless.”

With its first shot, a searching view of wispy clouds and vapor trails in a deep-blue sky, “Every Man for Himself” announces one of the principal motifs of Godard’s later films: some of the most sumptuous and awestruck images of nature ever put on film. The presence of nature is simply the presence of Rolle. But the pictorial richness and density can be traced directly to Godard and Miéville’s constant video production in the mid-seventies. Now that Godard had his own studio, he was intimate with his tools and was able to exercise a craftsmanlike virtuosity in every aspect of his art. Starting with this film, Godard, like a painter painting the same apples or model or coastline for twenty years, developed most of his full-length projects from increasingly complex elaborations of a small number of obsessive themes, ranging from the grandly philosophical to the painfully intimate.

Foremost among these themes are the moral combat of filmmaking and the material conditions of the art—sometimes exemplified by an actor playing a filmmaker and sometimes by the saturnine presence of Godard himself. In “Passion” (1982), a filmmaker struggles with the artistic, financial, and emotional complications of a large-scale film, the specifics of which he hasn’t quite figured out; in “First Name: Carmen” (1983), Godard plays Uncle Jean, an involuntarily idled old filmmaker enjoying his dotage in a hospital; in “Soigne Ta Droite” (1987), a director, again played by Godard, is charged with making a film that must be ready for distribution that very night. Having exhausted the stock of mythical Hollywood heroes in the sixties, and of ideological ones in the seventies, Godard was down to his last hero: himself.

After forming his partnership with Miéville, Godard started managing not only his time but also his budget; his involvement in the art of moviemaking became a matter of business. Generally, his budgets are put directly under his control by the producer, and his take is what is left over. This financial arrangement permits him to bring in people and equipment without regard to specific line items, and lets him shoot and reshoot as he chooses. It also challenges him to put up money when necessary. Yet these contingencies, too, he folds back into his art. “What sets me apart from lots of people in the cinema,” Godard has said, “is that money is part of the screenplay, in the story of the film, and that the film is part of money, like mother-child, father-daughter.”

Godard has no children of his own—indeed, he has said that making children and making films are mutually exclusive—but children, real or symbolic, have proved central to his later work. As he has pointed out, “Psychoanalysis and cinema were born in the same year.” In the early eighties, he began to treat the relations of an older director to his young actresses as a variant of the Freudian scenario of incest: the father’s forbidden desire for his daughter becomes the master script for all cinema. A section in “Every Man for Himself,” aptly titled “Fear,” shows the “Godard” character speaking of his sexual desire for his eleven-year-old daughter. In “First Name: Carmen,” a contemporary version of the opera (with Bizet’s music replaced by Beethoven quartets performed onscreen), Carmen plays on the incestuous longings of her Uncle Jean to lure him into making a movie that will serve as cover for her band of robbers. And in “Hail Mary” (1985), a modernization of the story of the Virgin Birth, Godard introduces the theme once more. Remarkably, the film that Godard originally proposed to its lead actress, Myriem Roussel, was a non-Biblical drama on the subject of father-



“We slipped in the tub.”

• •

daughter incest, in which the male lead would be played by Godard. It was only after Roussel’s refusal that, as Godard later said, “it occurred to me: God the Father and his daughter.”

But as Godard was taking on the grand themes of Western civilization—European painting, opera, classical music, psychoanalysis, Christianity—the world, particularly the American movie world, was heading in a different direction. In the United States, the appeal of foreign films has always depended on their blend of intelligence and sex, but Godard’s movies were unusually demanding intellectually, and the sex wasn’t fun. At the same time, after the financial success of Spielberg’s “Jaws” and George Lucas’s “Star Wars,” Hollywood was gearing its movies to the adolescent raised on TV, and the burgeoning American independent cinema likewise offered a more familiar set of references. Even the most striking of the independent films, like Jim Jarmusch’s “Stranger Than Paradise,” didn’t demand a knowledge of Delacroix or Beethoven to be appreciated.

Paradoxically, Godard’s reliance on recovered fragments of Western culture lent his films a new emotional depth. Yet his work of the mid-nineteen-eighties was released commercially in the United States with little fanfare—until 1985, when “Hail Mary” generated a controversy too heated to be ignored. Although the film’s outward elements seem jokey (Joseph drives a taxi, Mary helps out in her father’s gas station and plays on a girls’ basketball team), the tone and import of the film are sublime and respectful, and have even suggested to some a powerful, non-dogmatic argument for Christian faith. Many believers, however, were disturbed by other aspects of the film: Mary is shown not only nude but in erotic agony, as if she were in the throes of sexual possession, presumably by the Holy Spirit. The film met with protests, sometimes violent, in cities throughout Europe and the United States. When Pope John Paul II criticized it, Godard responded with a barbed apology, requesting its withdrawal from the Italian market: “It’s the house of the church, and if the Pope didn’t want a bad boy running around in his house the least I could do is respect his wishes. This Pope has a special relationship to Mary; he considers her a daughter almost.”

At the 1985 Cannes Film Festival, flush with his renewed celebrity and notoriety, Godard approached Menahem Golan, of Cannon Films, and asked him to produce a film of “King Lear.” Golan agreed, and wrote out a contract on a napkin from the bar where they were meeting, adding one clause: the script would be written by Norman Mailer. Godard was delighted with the plan: “It was King Lear and his daughter Cordelia that I had in mind, a little like God and Mary in the other film.” At first, Mailer balked, assuming that Godard was “hell on writers.” He was persuaded, he told me, only by Golan’s offer to let him direct his own film, “Tough Guys Don’t Dance,” if he agreed. Godard’s first move was to sign Orson Welles as an actor, or “guide”; but after Welles died, later that year, Godard came up with another idea: Mailer himself would play King Lear, and his daughter Kate, an actress, would play Cordelia. This, too, Mailer accepted, with misgivings.

“I finally decided that the only way to do a modern ‘King Lear’—because that was what Menahem Golan wanted—was to make him a Mafia godfather,” Mailer said. “I couldn’t conceive of anyone else in my range of understanding who would disown a daughter for refusing to compliment him. So I turned it into a script I called ‘Don Learo’ ”—pronounced “lay-AH-ro”—“which to my knowledge Godard never looked at.” Mailer shouldn’t have been surprised, inasmuch as Godard hadn’t read Shakespeare’s play, either. Instead, Godard admitted, he watched all the available filmed versions of it: “I had a vague idea that there was this girl who says, ‘Nothing,’ and that was enough.”

Although Godard had intended to make the film near Mailer’s house in Provincetown, he suddenly summoned Norman and Kate Mailer to Switzerland. “When we got there, to the hotel, he wanted to start shooting right away, and so he started giving me lines, and I was hardly playing King Lear. He said, ‘You will be Norman Mailer in this.’ And then he gave me some lines, and they were really, by any comfortable measure, dreadful. They would be lines like, I’d pick up the phone and I’d say, ‘Kate, Kate, you must come down immediately, I have just finished the script, it is superb’—stuff like that. He was shooting, and we were getting some dreadful stuff. . . . I said to him, ‘Look, I really can’t say these lines. If you give me another name than Norman Mailer, I'll say anything you write for me, but if I'm going to be speaking in my own name, then I've got to write the lines, or at least I've got to be consulted on the lines.' So he was very annoyed and he said, 'That's the end of shooting for the day.' "

Godard conceded that the difficulties in their relationship stemmed in part from his way of working ("I don't know very well what I want to do, so he couldn't really have a discussion about it. He had nothing to do but obey, to have confidence in me"), but he also believes that Mailer was hostile to his vision of the film, which was supposed to be like "reportage" of Mailer's relationship with his daughter. "When he saw that he was going to have to talk about himself and his family, it was all over, in a quarter hour," Godard told me. "And that's the little piece that stayed in the film, but he left the next day" (a mutual decision, according to Mailer). To Danièle Heymann, a journalist from *Le Monde* who visited the set, Godard added one fillip: "He left, being unable, he said, 'to see himself represented in a situation of incest.' " When I mentioned this to Mailer, he asked me, "Is it a reasonable demand to ask someone to, in their own name, play that they have an incestuous relationship to their daughter?"

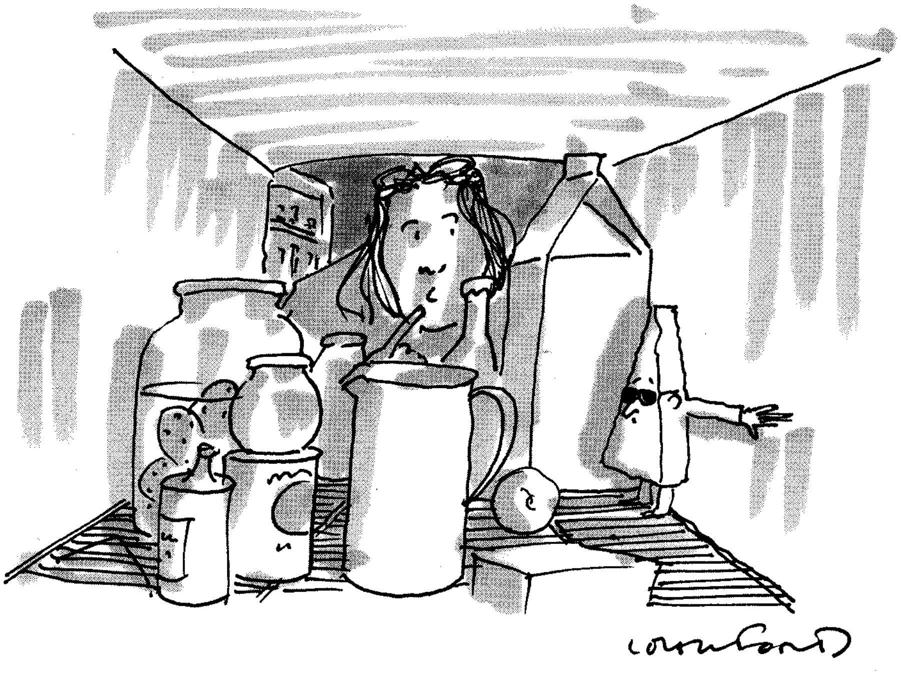
After Mailer quit, Godard asked Rod Steiger, Lee Marvin, and Richard Nixon to play the part; all three turned him down. Finally, he replaced Mailer with Burgess Meredith, and asked Molly Ringwald to come to Switzerland and play Cordelia. Ringwald told me that she was fascinated by Godard's spontaneous working methods, but she freely admitted that she didn't always know what he was up to. She also called attention to an aspect of his films that, she says, is often overlooked—their humor. Ringwald said Godard was "a great joker" on the set, particularly with Meredith: he "short-sheeted Burgess Meredith's bed," and "put fake blood on his bed, too." Heymann had watched Godard set up a shot of Meredith's bloodstained bed, however, and had asked Godard's assistant about it; the assistant explained it as evidence of Cordelia's lost virginity. The scene as filmed includes neither Cordelia nor Lear, and, indeed, Ringwald was unaware of the sexual subtext during the shoot, but in the finished film the incestuous implications are clear.

True to Godard's later style, the film's real story is precisely how to tell the story, or whether it is in fact possible to do so. The film is constructed around a frisky, quizzical character called William Shakespeare, Jr., the Fifth (acted by the theatre director Peter Sellars), who has been hired by the Queen of England to recover the works of his ancestor, which have been lost, along with the rest of culture, in the technological holocaust of Chernobyl. In the course of his tragicomic quest, Shakespeare, Jr., meets a reclusive professor—Godard himself, adorned with jingling dreadlocks made of video cables—who has reinvented the movie theatre in an attempt to rediscover "the image." The professor's ultimate creation is springtime, which he achieves, on Easter Sunday, by reattaching the petals of dead flowers through the miracle of reverse photography—an effort that costs him his life but makes possible the "first image." This image turns out to be a cinematic crystallization of "King Lear" 's most tragic moment: the tableau vivant in which Cordelia lies dead and her father must acknowledge the reality of her death.

Godard's "rediscovery" of Shakespeare is a grand statement about the power of moviemaking—its ability to appropriate and restore all other art forms. Yet "King Lear" makes an even more extravagant claim on behalf of Godard himself: that the cinema has been lost, and that its reinvention, and therefore the rediscovery of all art, is Godard's personal mission. His artistry, he suggests, can even revive nature, making flowers bloom again in spring. The cost may be great, but then the ultimate creator whose work Godard would subsume under his own is God.

Godard has said that he doesn't have a "pile of scripts in a drawer waiting to be filmed." Most of his films are based on stories that come to him on the spur of the moment, once the money is in hand. But one project that weighed on him for decades was a visual history of the cinema, which he started shooting, on video, shortly after he finished "King Lear."

This eight-part series, which the director finally completed in 1998, is called "Histoire(s) du Cinéma." It is not a comprehensive narrative history but a



THAT ELUSIVE PECORINO!

willfully subjective meditation on themes from the cinema that connect speculations about history and culture with an intimate yet cosmic vision of film. In one episode, Godard declares that the cinema "was the only way to make, to tell, to realize: me, that I have an *histoire* in and of myself." The hundreds of video clips that he juxtaposes and superimposes are related by associations that feel as private as those from the mental screen on which the films of his life have been projected.

The first installments of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma" were completed in 1988, and their effect was immediately evident: Godard stopped appearing in his features, and the films—"For Ever Mozart," "Hélas pour Moi," and "New Wave"—displayed a newfound grandeur and classical balance. It is as if the "Histoire(s)" had become the outlet for the irrepressible profusion of thought and the need to give himself voice that marked Godard's earlier work.

As the title suggests, "New Wave" is the story of the French New Wave, albeit treated allegorically. Alain Delon plays identical twins who are never seen together: the film begins with the weak one (who represents earlier directors) being rescued and dominated by a powerful woman (the cinema), who finally does away with him; it ends with the strong one (the New Wave), who finds the woman weakened and puts her troubled affairs in order. The characters speak in poetic phrases borrowed from literature; Godard had his assistant search through dozens of literary works in search of potentially useful phrases. "There isn't a word of mine in it, not a word," Godard told me. "Maybe one word of mine, 'Hello, how's it going'—I think that's all."

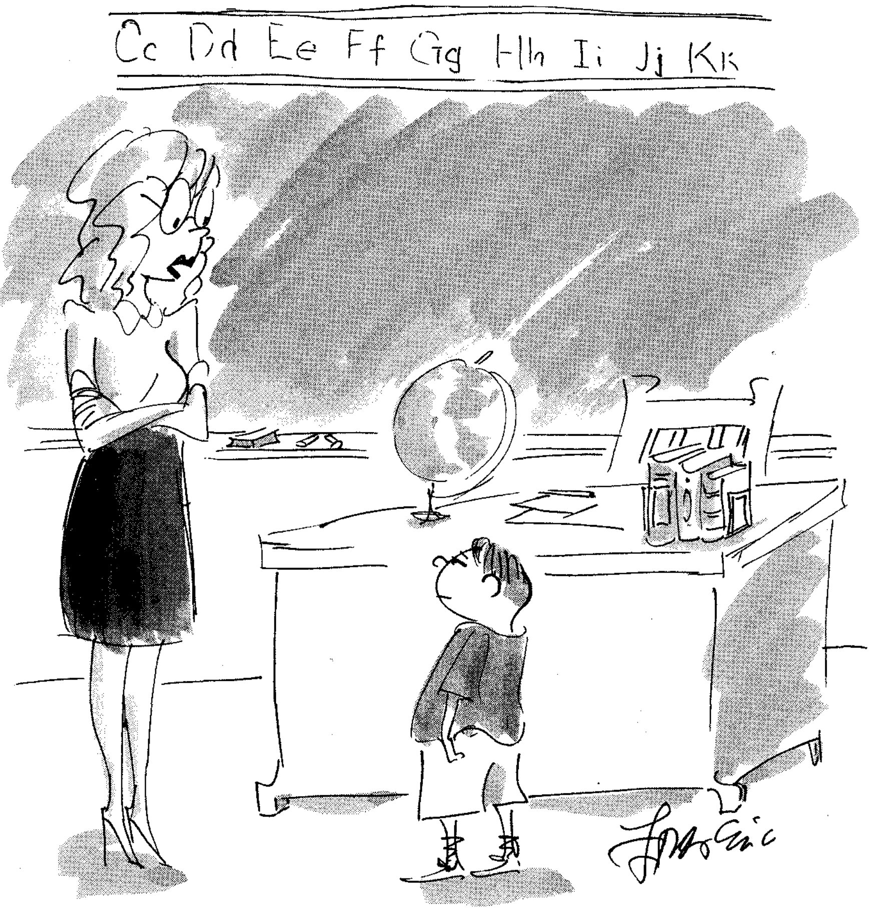
He went to the shelf to get me a copy of the CD release of the soundtrack, and asked me if I had seen the new set of CDs, with lavishly illustrated libretti, of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma." I asked him about this diversification. "Everything, everything is cinema," he replied. "Everything is cinema."

"Nice job, Reverend, but I think I'll stick to worshipping my body."

As Godard's films went off in new directions in the early nineties, Godard himself was looking for ways to expand his contacts with the new generation. In 1990, he and Miéville signed a five-year deal to move their studio to the premises of La Fémis, the prestigious film school in Paris, but the arrangement fell through. A few years later, he approached the government-funded acting conservatory of the Théâtre National de Strasbourg about making a film with its students, "The Training of the Actor in France," but both the administration and the students were unreceptive to Godard's ideas. At the same time, his name was floated for a chair in the Collège de France, a French academy similar to the Institute for Advanced Study, but there he also met with opposition. Thrown back on his own resources, Godard was bitter but not surprised. In his self-portrait film, "JLG/JLG" (1994), he contended that art is the exception while culture is the rule. And, he added, "it is part of the rule to want the death of the exception."

Godard has not denied that there was also a financial motive for seeking these institutional connections. He has said that his goal is "to be a filmmaker and state functionary, as in Russia. . . . My dream is to work by the month and by the year." He also told me that he has sold the rights to "three-quarters" of his films to the major French film-production and distribution company Gaumont. "I'm arriving at the end of my life: I haven't made any money, I have nothing put aside," he recently told another interviewer. "No pension, no Social Security. If I have an accident . . ."

In fact, Godard has been making videos on commission since the seventies: his clients have included Britain's Channel 4, France Telecom, the French appliance store Darty, and UNICEF. He told me that one such video, "Les Enfants Jouent à la Russie," from 1993, was commissioned privately by an American producer, who has never shown it. Godard himself has no copy of it. When I mentioned that I had seen it, he said that it must have been "a bootleg." Most recently, he completed a thirteen-minute piece for the opening ceremony of the 2000 Cannes Film Festival, "The Origin of the 21st Century," a caustic postscript to "Histoire(s) du Cinéma," in which he offers a retrospective view of the twentieth century which juxtaposes clips of feature films with documentary images of the horrors the films failed to respond to. Received with bewilderment at Cannes, it was shown twice last month in a program of short videos at the New York Film Festival. The *Times* review of the program failed to mention it. Both showings sold out.


Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk

"You were kept after school to review multiplication and division. This is not a date."

• •

In 1998, Godard and Miéville made a fifty-minute video, "The Old Place," that was commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art. "We were paid five hundred thousand dollars for it," Godard told me. "Well, I thought, five hundred thousand dollars for a film that we'll finish in two weeks, not bad. But it took us a year to figure out what to do, to find the images, to choose the texts, et cetera. Then, after taxes, the cost of production—what's left?" "The Old Place" has not yet been shown publicly, and Godard wonders why not. He assumes that "they" don't like it: "Maybe they thought I was going to spend a lot of time in the museum, film their collection."

In the film, Godard and Miéville condemn Andy Warhol as a mercenary, reject abstract art as the work of artists who can no longer face history, and divide art into its visual component (starting with fields of flowers) and its political aspect (exemplified by documentary images of suffering). It is a provocative and disturbing work, and someone who views it in one of MOMA's belowground theatres may be moved to take a long, contemplative detour through the streets and the Park before daring to go upstairs to indulge in the museum's collection. I spoke with Mary Lea Bandy, MOMA's curator of film and video, who greatly admires the piece, and is proud to have arranged the commission. She considers Godard "as complex as Picasso or Dante," and says that he is "arguably the greatest living artist." She told me that "The Old Place" is to be shown at MOMA in February. She hopes to persuade Godard to come to New York for the occasion, but she understands his aversion to such events: "He's like a monk who has gone to the monastery to brood. There's a great deal of sorrow in what he's brooding about. The political idealism of socialism has disappointed him, yet he's very angry about the way that capitalism is managing things."

I asked Godard about the evolution of his politics. "We were for Mao, but when we saw the films he was making, they were bad. So we understood that there was necessarily something wrong with what he was saying." For Godard, the "reference for measuring, even for politics," is the cinema. He brought up the French farmer José Bové, who has recently become notorious in France for demolishing a McDonald's to protest globalization. "At bottom, I think he's right, but what bothers me with him is that if you show him a film of Antonioni he won't like it. So I'm suspicious. That's how we've stayed, completely, since the New Wave, we movie people. We're pretty sectarian, even 'racist'—in quotation marks, so to speak—in relation to cinema. If nobody makes good films, if nobody can make good films, then it will disappear. But as long as I'm alive it will last—let's say for twenty years."

The coming months will be active ones for Godard. Anne-Marie Miéville's latest film, "After the Reconciliation," which co-stars Godard, had its first press screening last week in Paris; two days later, the filmmakers presented it to high-school students of cinema in Sarlat, in southwestern France. The film will open in Paris and elsewhere in France on December 27th. "The Old Place" will première at the Cinémathèque Française in January, and "In Praise of Love" is scheduled for release in February or March. Meanwhile, Godard has also edited the five hours of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma" into a ninety-minute version, "Moments Choisis," which will be released in French theatres at the beginning of next year.

Nonetheless, this flurry of attention

cannot conceal the fact that, with the completion of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma," which in a way is also the *histoire de Godard* and the *histoire du monde*, Godard has reached a high, remote plateau, from which he appears to be looking for a hand down. He told me that leaving Rolle might be the answer: "We've been saying that it's our studio here, our studio of exteriors, between Geneva and Lausanne. The area is just about the size of Los Angeles, but here there are forests, the lake, snow, mountains, and wind. . . . But now we've had our fill, so to speak, of all these places, so we have to find something else."

After our interview, Godard tossed a black blazer over his T-shirt and invited me to have dinner with him at the restaurant of the hotel where I was staying. We walked downhill from his office to the hotel's broad, pebble-strewn terrace, where there were some fifteen widely spaced tables. Neither patrons nor staff acknowledged the filmmaker in any exceptional way. As we ordered, Godard decried the state of the world, using the cinema as a touchstone: "Before, if you had a little money, you could make a film like Cassavetes. If you had a lot, you could make a film like Kazan. Now they don't know how to do either one. They don't know how because they're not interested. Producers aren't interested in doing cinema, actors aren't interested in doing cinema, doctors aren't interested in doing medicine, psychiatrists—there are still a few who are interested, but that's starting to disappear, too."

Godard ordered a slice of fruit tart for dessert, and when I ordered an espresso he suggested I try a *ristrette* instead, a highly concentrated semi-demitasse, which is a local favorite. He ate the glazed baked fruit off the top of his pastry and grew wistful. "I've been sad for so long that now I'm making an effort to be more contented," he said. "Otherwise, one would have reason to cry all the time." When we parted for the evening, he told me to come by his office the next morning.

At the appointed time, I found curtains drawn over the wall-size window and the glass door, to which a note inscribed "Mr. Brody" was taped. Godard had written that he could not continue the interview because "it was not a real discussion" and was "*flou*"—out of focus, vague—but he wished me a better "game" with people I'd be seeing in Paris. I had been warned that this sort of thing might happen; one acquaintance in Paris had told me, "*Il est déstabilisateur né*"—"He is a born destabilizer."

Returning to the hotel terrace for a coffee, I asked the waitress who had served us the night before whether she had recognized my dinner companion. The woman replied, in a rapid, animated voice, "Oh yes, I know him well. He comes here pretty often, but we leave him alone. People ask us to get his autograph for them, but we don't do it. He doesn't like that. He came here to be in peace, and we leave him in peace. He's a very good customer—he's always contented, he never complains. If all our customers were like that, this would be a dream job."

I had expected that Godard would avoid the hotel that evening, but perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised to see him in the dining room with Anne-Marie Miéville when I went in for dinner. I approached him and said "*Bonsoir*." He hardly looked at me, and, with a forced smile, emitted a chilling "*Bonsoir*." Miéville scrutinized me, and then glanced back at him. I thanked Godard for his time, he thanked me and wished me "*Bon voyage*," and I returned to my table.

From across the noisy room I could hear only Miéville's high, flutelike voice, descanting loudly and emphatically: "Brigitte Bardot . . . Cannes . . . to drop off his screenplay . . . he's waiting . . . budget . . . doing the color timing before the editing. . . ." Occasionally, she would pause, and he would murmur haltingly before she resumed.

The scene reminded me of two films. The first is by Miéville, "We Are All Still Here" (1997), a meditation on a woman's search for "the good man" (adapted from Plato's "Gorgias"), who turns out to be an introverted old actor, played by Godard. The woman prods him into better manners and more patience with worldly foibles, and he endures her tender harangues. The second is "Two Weeks in Another Town," by Vincente Minnelli, which Godard calls one of "the only two good films on the cinema," in which a tyrannical director (played by Edward G. Robinson) clashes with his strong-willed wife, who is nonetheless his only consolation when a producer intrudes on his art. Afterward, when I saw the waitress in the corridor, she said, "You know, he's very unsociable. Very shy and very unsociable. He hardly ever talks. She—his wife—she talks, but not him."

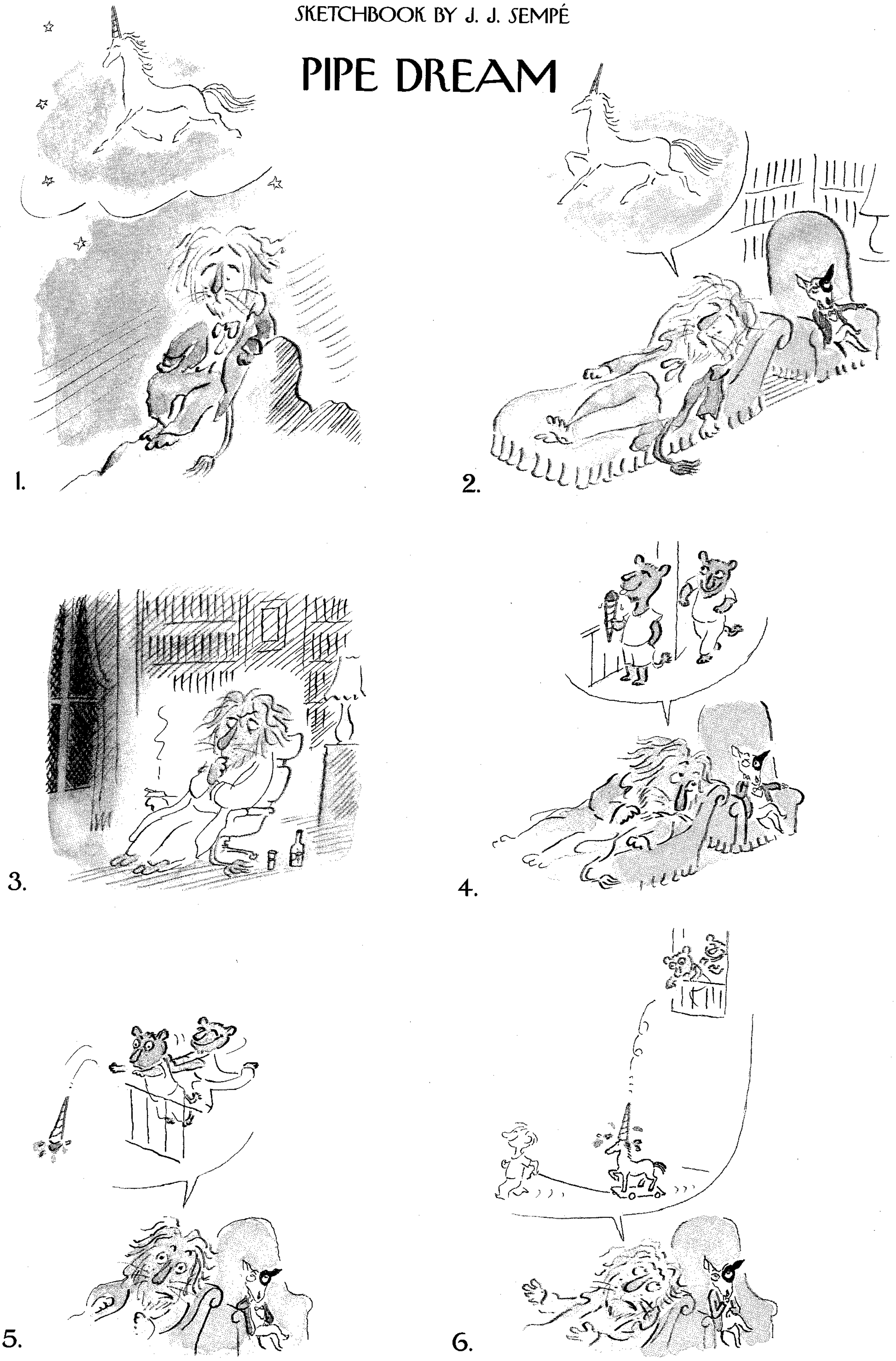
Walking along the lakefront in Rolle in the twilight of the summer evening, I recognized many of the elements of Godard's later films: the lapping of water on rocks; the constant and startlingly various voices of birds; the rhapsodic blue of the sky; the vapor trail of a small, potent airplane; the rustle of leaves in the wind; the short, hollow peal of an ancient church bell; and, most of all, the sense of a last refuge. I also noted the lack of a good movie theatre. I thought again of the filmmaker's plans to leave town, and wondered where he could go.

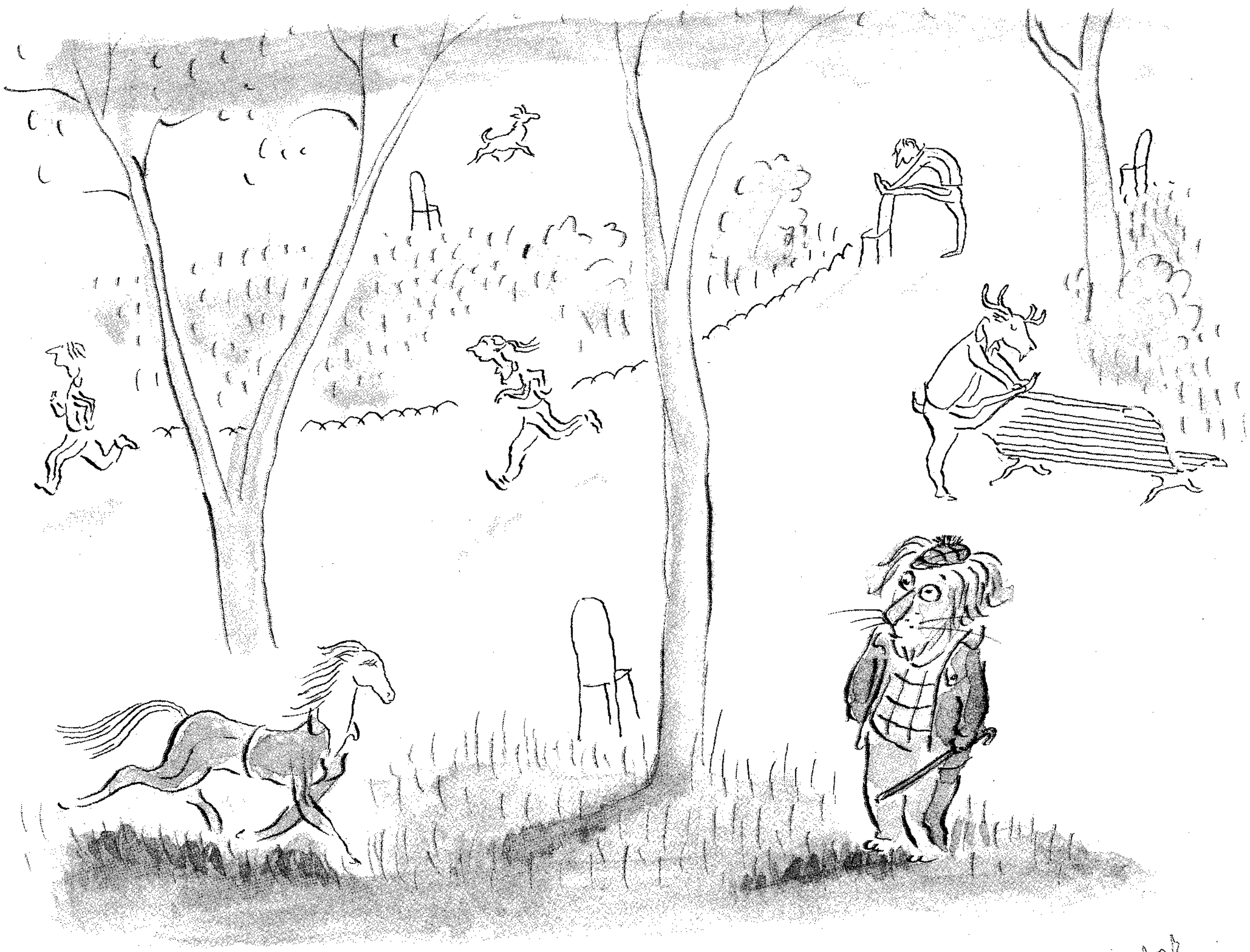
A move wouldn't be easy, but very little about Godard's professional life feels easy. Godard has put himself in a singularly unenviable position: he has taken the entirety of the cinema upon himself, has identified its survival with his own, has assumed the burden of its fictional forms like the mark of sin. If the new generation of French directors—and, for that matter, American independent filmmakers—feel it unnecessary to confront the history of cinema in their work, it is because Godard has done it for them; they have been freed of the burden of the classical cinema by his sacrifice. At the same time, Godard's highly particularized obsession with the past and future of filmmaking has left him with virtually no share in its present. It is as if he had exchanged his place on earth for his place in history.

As I tried to imagine where Godard could go next, Hawthorne's story of Wakefield came to mind: a man intending to leave home for a week stays away for twenty years and then "entered the door one evening, quietly, as from a day's absence." Although Hawthorne gives the tale an equivocally happy ending, he follows it with a frank declaration of its darker purpose: "Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another, and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever. Like Wakefield, he may become, as it were, the Outcast of the Universe." ♦

SKETCHBOOK BY J. J. SEMPÉ

PIPE DREAM





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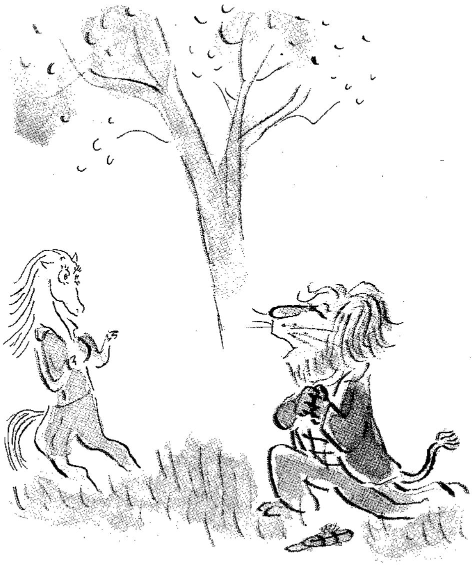

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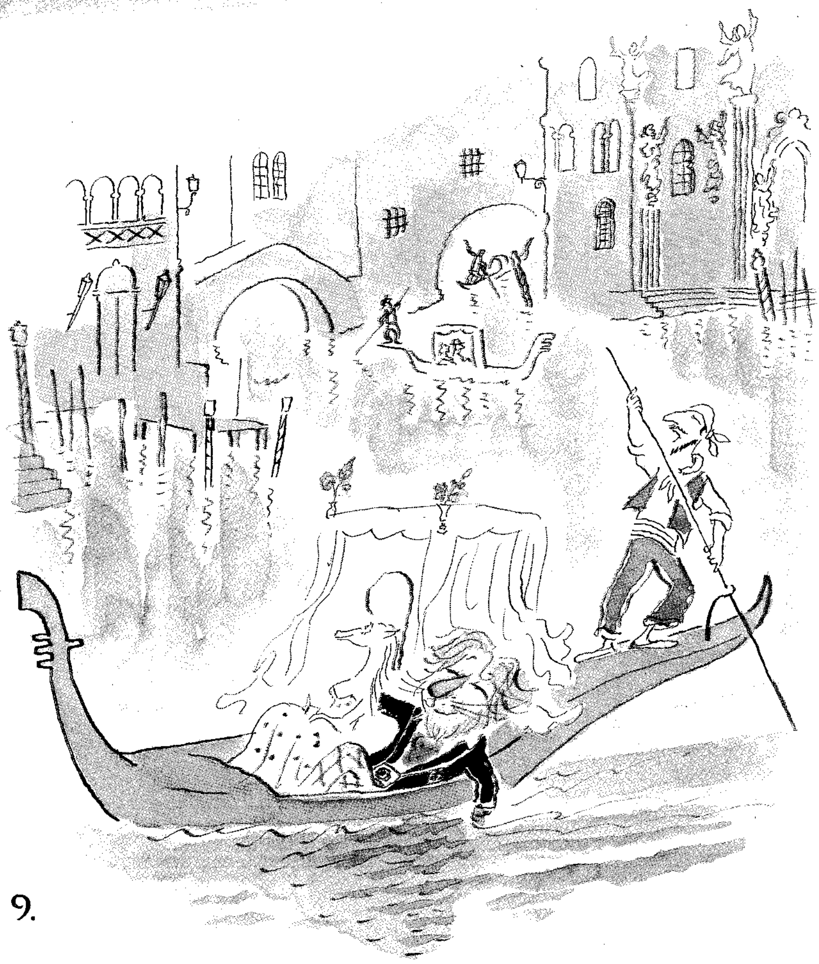

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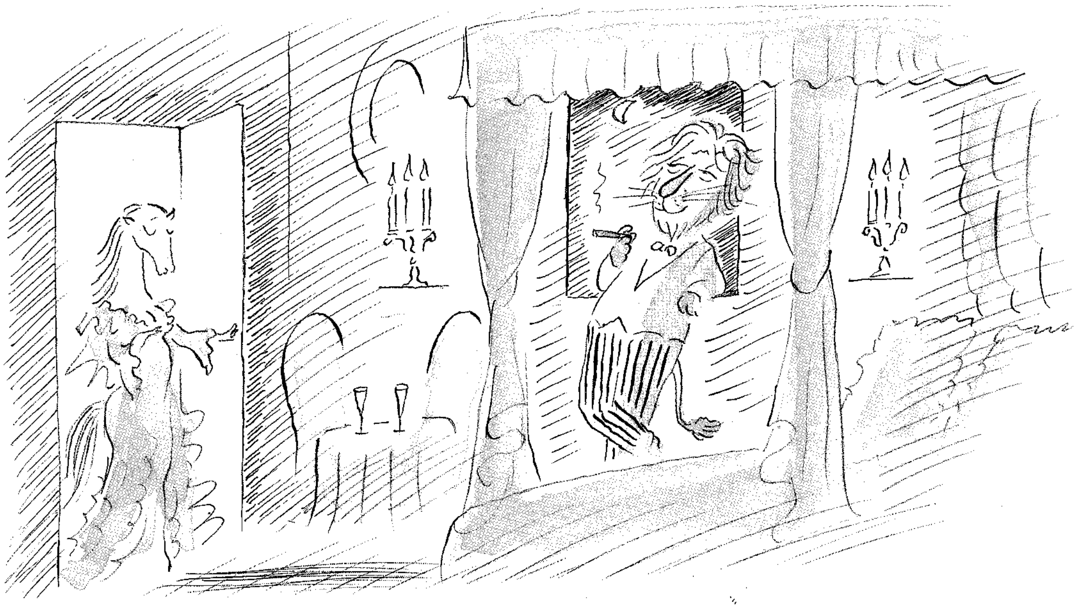

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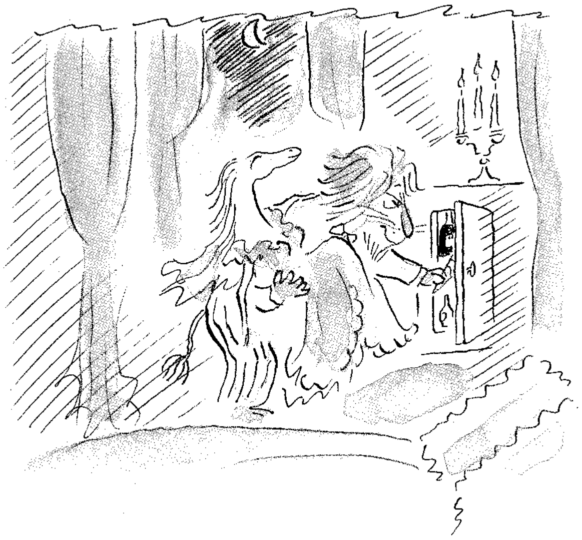

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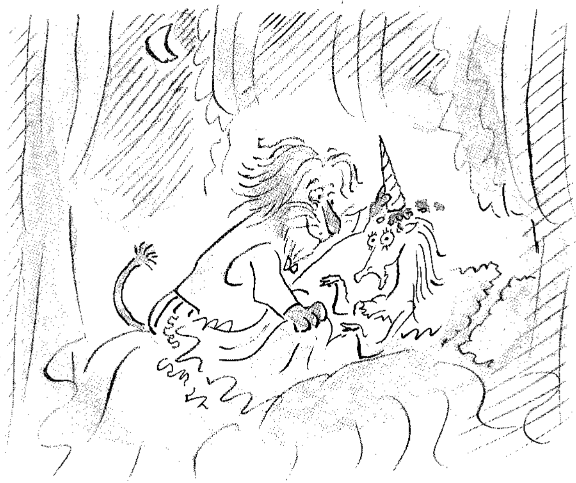

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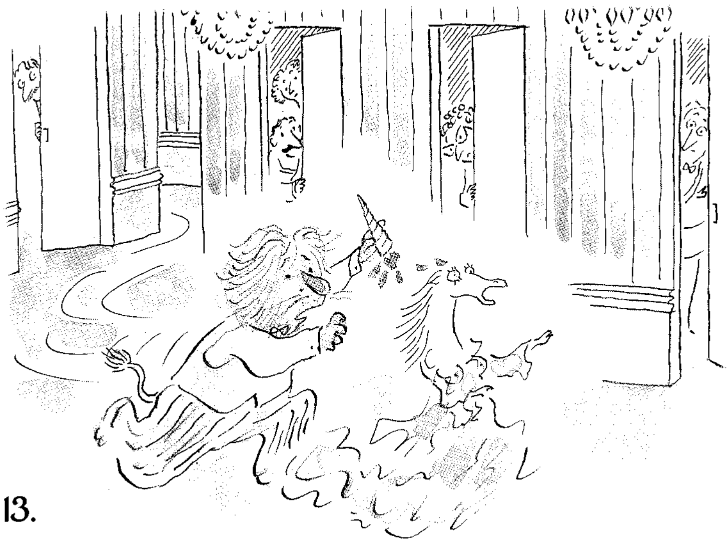

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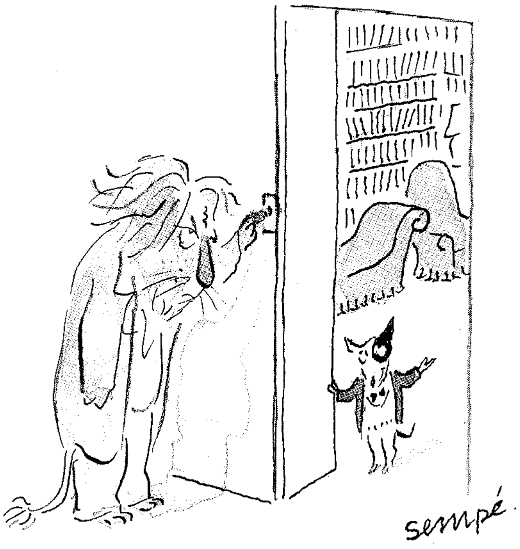


14.

FICTION

THE WOMEN OF THIS WORLD

BY ANN BEATTIE

The dinner was going to be good. Dale had puréed leeks and salsify to add to the pumpkin in the food processor—a tablespoon or so of sweet vermouth might give it a little zing—and, as baby-girl pink streaked through the gray-blue sky over the field, she dropped a CD into the player and listened matter-of-factly to Lou Reed singing matter-of-factly, "I'm just a gift to the women of this world."

By now her husband, Nelson, would be on his way back from Logan, bringing his stepfather, Jerome, and Jerome's girlfriend, Brenda—who had taken the shuttle from New York, after much debate about plane versus train versus driving—for the annual (did three years in a row make something annual?) pre-Thanksgiving dinner. They could have come on Thanksgiving, but Didi, Jerome's ex (and Nelson's mother), was coming that day, and there was no love lost between them. Brenda didn't like big gatherings, anyway. Brenda was much younger than Jerome. She used to nap half the afternoon—because she was shy, Jerome said—but lately her occupation had become glamorous and she had quit teaching gym at the middle school to work as a personal trainer, and suddenly she was communicative, energized, radiant—if that wasn't a cliché for women in love.

Dale turned on the food processor and felt relieved as the ingredients liquefied. It wasn't that the food processor hadn't always worked—when she placed the blade in the bottom correctly, that is—but that she feared it wouldn't work. She always ran through a scenario in which she'd have to scoop everything out and dump it in the old Waring blender that had come with the rented house in Maine and that didn't always work. With blenders so cheap, she amazed herself by not simply buying a new one.

Nelson was forever indebted to Jerome for appearing on the scene when he was five years old, and staying until he was sixteen. Jerome had seen to it that Nelson was spared being sent to Groton, and had taught him to play every known sport—at least, every ordinary sport. But would Nelson have wanted to learn, say, archery?

Nelson wanted to learn everything, though he didn't want to do everything. He was happy to have quit teaching and wanted to do very little. He liked to know about things, though. That way, he could talk about them. Her cruel nickname for him was No-Firsthand-Knowledge Nelson. It got tedious sometimes: people writing down the names of books from which Nelson had got his often esoteric information. People calling after the party was over, having looked up some strange assertion of Nelson's in their kid's Encyclopædia Britannica and discovered that he was essentially right, but not entirely. They often left these quibbles and refutations on the answering machine: "Dick here. Listen, you weren't exactly right about Mercury. It's because Hermes means 'mediator' in Greek, so there is an element of logic to his taking the souls of the dead to the underworld"; "Nelson? This is Pauline. Listen, Rushdie did write the introduction to that Glen Baxter book. I can bring it next time and show you. He really does write introductions all the time. Well, thanks to you both for a great evening. My sister really appreciated Dale's copying that recipe for her—though no one can make butterflied lamb like Dale, I told her. Anyway. O.K. Bye. Thanks again."

Jerome and Brenda would be twenty or thirty minutes away, assuming the plane landed on time, which you could never assume if you knew anything about Logan. Still: Dale could manage a quick shower, if not a bath, and she should probably change into a dress because it seemed a little oblivious to have people over when you were wearing sweats, even if you did have a cashmere sweater pulled over them. Maybe a bra under the sweater. A pair of corduroys, instead of the super-comfortable sweats. And shoes . . . definitely some sort of shoes.

Nelson called on the cell phone. "Need anything?" he said. She could hear Terry Gross's well-modulated, entirely reasonable voice on the radio. Only Nelson and Terry and her guest were talking in the car: the passengers were silent, in case Dale had forgotten some necessary ingredient. Yes, pink peppercorns. Try finding them on 95 North. And, of course, they weren't really peppercorns; they were only called peppercorns because they looked like black peppercorns. Or: purple oregano. An entirely different flavor from green.

"Not a thing," she said. She had changed into black corduroy pants and a white shirt. Keeping it clean would preoccupy her, give her some way to stay a little detached from everyone. She was shy, too. Though she wore bad-girl black boots.

"Brenda wants to see the Wedding Cake House. I thought we'd swing by. Would that mess up your timing?"

"I didn't cook anything," Dale said.

Silence, then. Unkind of her, to set his mind scrambling for alternatives.

"Kidding," she said.

She had toured the Wedding Cake House soon after they moved to the area. It was in Kennebunk, a huge yellow-and-white creation, with gothic spires like pointed phalluses. Legend had it that it had been built by a sea captain for his bride, to remind her of their wedding night when he left for sea.

"We'll be back around four."

Someone else was talking to Terry Gross in a deep, earnest voice.

"See you soon," Nelson said. "Hon?" he said.

"Bye," Dale said. She picked up two bottles of red wine from the wine rack near the phone. A little too close to the heat grate, so no wine was kept on the last four shelves. Not a problem in summer, but a minor inconvenience come cold weather. She remembered that Brenda had been delighted with a Fumé Blanc she'd served last time, and bought the same bottle for her again. Jerome, of course, because of his years in Paris, would have the Saint-Émilion. Nelson had taken to sipping Jameson's lately. Still, she'd chilled several bottles of white, because he was unpredictable. On the top rack lay the bottle of Opus One an appreciative student from the photography workshop she'd taught had given her. Two nights later, she planned to serve it to the doctor who had diagnosed both her hypoglycemia and her Ménière's disease, which meant, ironically, that she could no longer drink. If she did, she'd risk more attacks of the sickening vertigo that had plagued her and gone misdiagnosed for years, leaving her sweaty and trembling and so weak she'd often have to stay in bed the day after the attack. "Like taking acid and getting swept up in a tidal wave," she had said to the otolaryngologist. The woman had looked at her with surprise, as if she'd been gathering strawberries and suddenly come upon a watermelon. "Quite a vivid description," the doctor had said. "My husband is a writer. He sometimes stops me dead in my tracks the same way."

"Is he Brian McCambry?" Dale had asked.

"Yes," the doctor said. Again, she seemed surprised.

Nelson had been the one who speculated that Dr. Anna McCambry might be the wife of Brian McCambry. Dale, herself, had read only a few pieces by McCambry, though Nelson—as she told the doctor—had read her many others.

"I'll pass on the compliment," the doctor said. "Now back to the real world."

What a strange way to announce the transition, Dale had thought, though her symptoms sometimes were the real world for her, crowding out any other concerns. What was more real than telescoping vision, things blurring and swarming you, so that you had no depth perception, no ability to stand? The doctor talked to her about alterations in her diet. Prescribed diuretics. Said so many things so fast that Dale had to call the nurse, later that afternoon, to be reminded what several of them had been. The doctor had overheard the call. "Bring your husband and come for drinks, and I'll go over this with you while they talk," the doctor had said. " 'Drinks' in your case means seltzer."

"Thanks," Dale said. No doctor had ever asked to see her outside the office.

She opened the Fumé Blanc but left the bottle of Saint-Émilion corked. How did she know? Maybe Jerome would decide to go directly to the white French Burgundy. What hadn't seemed fussy

GREGORY CREWDSON, "UNTITLED" (1987)/LUHRING AUGUSTINE GALLERY

and precious before did now, a little: people and their wine preferences. Still, she indulged the vegetarians in their restrictions, knew better than to prepare veal for anyone, unless she was sure it wouldn't result in a tirade. Her friend Andy liked still water, her photography student Nance preferred Perrier. Dale's mind was full of people's preferences and quirks, their mystical beliefs and food taboos, their ways of demonstrating their independence and their dependency at table. The little tests: Would there happen to be sea salt? Was there a way to adjust the pepper grinder to grind a little more coarsely? A call for chutney. That one had really put her over the top. There was Stonewall Kitchen Roasted Garlic and Onion Jam already on the table. She had sent Nelson for the chutney, since Paul was more his friend than hers.

She went into the downstairs bathroom and brushed her hair, gathering it back in a ponytail. She took off the white shirt and changed back into her cashmere sweater, giving it a tug she knew she shouldn't give it to make sure it fell just right. She looked at her boots and wished it were still summer; she'd be more comfortable barefoot, but it wasn't summer, and her feet would freeze. She remembered that Julia Roberts had been barefoot when she married Lyle Lovett. Julia Roberts and Lyle Lovett: not as strange as Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley.

Brenda came in first, shaking her thick mane of prematurely white hair. She was full of enthusiasm about the trip to the Wedding Cake House. It was *amazing*, *beautiful*, somehow sort of *weird*—a little creepy, some woman living inside her wedding cake like the old woman who lived in a shoe. Then Brenda began apologizing: she had insisted they drive down the longest dirt road in history, to get a basket of apples. Nelson put the basket down on the kitchen island, which Dale would soon need every inch of to do the final dinner preparations. She could no longer eat apples, or anything excessively sweet. She was sick of explaining to people what she couldn't eat, and why. In fact, she had started to say she was diabetic, since everyone seemed to know that that meant you couldn't eat sugar. There was also the possibility that the apples might be Brenda and Jerome's, to take back to New York, so she said "Nice," rather than "Thank you."

The real owners of the house obviously must have loved to cook. The kitchen was well laid out, with the exception of the dishwasher being to the left of the sink. Dale had become so adept at using her left hand to load the dishwasher that she thought it might be amusing to be both diabetic and left-handed. By the time she left the house, she might be an entirely different person.

"It's great to see you. Did you get my note? You didn't go to a lot of trouble, did you?" Jerome said, squeezing Dale, then letting go.

Brenda was still in a dither. "We didn't mess you up, did we?" she said.

"Not at all," Dale said.

"I shouldn't ask, but I've been cooped up in the plane, and then in the car. Would there be enough time to take a walk? A quick walk?"

"Sure," Dale said. She had just put the roast in the oven to bake. There was plenty of time.

"Would you mind if Nelson and I take a look at that wiring problem? I'm much better when there's natural light," Jerome said.

"Oh, he's on his kick again about how he can't see or hear!" Brenda said. She added, as if they didn't know, "He's sixty-*four*."

"What wiring problem?" Dale said. She wanted to be barefoot. She wanted to be Julia Roberts, with a big, dazzling smile. Instead, she could feel the skin between her eyebrows tightening. *Wiring problem*? The way Brenda talked got into her brain; in her presence, she started thinking in concerned italics.

"I was trying to hook up speakers in the upstairs hallway. I can get one of them going but not the other. Might be a bad speaker," Nelson said.

Nelson had spent a good portion of his book advance on new sound equipment. His compromise with Dale was: when guests arrived, there would be no music. So far, the day had consisted of bluegrass, Dylan's first electric album, Japanese ceremonial music, an hour or so of "La Bohème," and Astor Piazzolla. Dale had listened to the weather report and one cut from a Lou Reed CD that she imagined might be Jerome's theme song. She was fond of Jerome, but he did think he was God's gift to women.

"You'll come on a walk with me, won't you?" Brenda said. She was wearing shoes that would have been inappropriate for a walk, if she hadn't been Brenda: brown pointy-toed boots with three-inch heels. This year's hip look, while Dale's had become the generic. Brenda had shrink-wrapped herself into a black leather skirt, worn over patterned pantyhose. On top was a sweater with a stretched-out turtleneck that Dale thought must be one of Jerome's. He had kept his collection of French hand-knit sweaters for twenty-some years.

"Just down the road?" Dale said, gesturing to the dirt road that went past the collapsed greenhouse behind the garage. She liked the road. You could usually see deer at this time of the evening. Also, because of the way the road dipped, it seemed as though you were walking right into the sky, which had now turned Hudson River School radiant. Dale's friend Janet Lebow was the only year-rounder at the end of the road. When the nasty summer people left, taking their Dobermans and their shiny four-wheel-drives with them, Janet was happy not only to let Dale walk the No Trespassing/Danger/Posted/Keep Out road; Janet usually sent her dog, Tyrone (who was afraid of the summer dogs) out to exercise with Dale. Janet was divorced, fifty going on twenty-five, as exuberant as a teen-ager (she often had a crush on some new boyfriend), devoted to tabloids, late-night movies, astrological forecasts, and "fun" temporary tattoos of things like unicorns leaping over rainbows. She was not a stupid woman, only childish and a little too upbeat, traumatized by her ex-husband's verbal abuse. Janet shuddered when she mentioned her ex-husband's name and rarely talked about the marriage. Tyrone was a smart golden retriever–black Lab mix. When he wasn't in the tributary to the York River, he was wriggling in the field, trying to shed fleas. The dog and the kitchen were the two things Dale felt sure she would miss most when they had to vacate the house. They had it through the following summer, when the philosophy professor and his wife would return from their year in Munich. By then, Nelson's book would supposedly be finished. Dale knew she was not going to enjoy the home stretch. Nelson had written other books, which inevitably made him morose because of the enormousness of the task. Then the music selections would become really eclectic.

Dale reached into the flour bin of the Hoosier cabinet and took out her secret stash of doughnut holes, which she bought on Saturdays at the Portsmouth Farmers' Market. She did not eat doughnut holes: they were exclusively for Tyrone, who thought Dale had invented the best game of fetch imaginable. He would race for the doughnut hole, sniff through the field for it, throw it in the air so Dale could see he'd got it, then gulp it down in one swallow. She had taken to applauding. Lately, she had started to add "Good dog, Tyrone" to the applause.

"Is that *cigarettes*?" Brenda whispered to Dale, though Nelson and Jerome were already walking up the stairs.

"Doughnut holes," Dale whispered back. "You'll see." She plunged what remained of them, in their plastic bag, into the deep pocket of her coat.

"I keep peanut M&M's in my lingerie drawer," Brenda said. "And Jerome—you know, he doesn't think I know he still drinks Pernod."

"It's for a dog," Dale said.

"Pernod?" Brenda said.

"No. Doughnut holes."

"What do you mean?"

"Come on," Dale said. "You'll see."

At dinner—during which Dale could sense Brenda's respect for her, both as a cook and as a crazy woman (she'd sent three doughnut holes up in the air at the same time, like the last moments of the Fourth of July fireworks)—they discussed the brass sundial Dale had placed atop autumn leaves in the center of the table. Nelson informed everyone that the piece sticking up was called the gnomon.

"No mon is an island," Jerome said. Jerome very much enjoyed wordplay and imitating dialects. Dialect from de islands was currently his favorite. He and Brenda had recently vacationed in Montego Bay.

"And this is the shadow," Nelson said, pointing, ignoring Jerome's silly contribution. "This is the plate, this the hour line, this the dial, or diagram."

"You are a born teacher," Brenda said.

"I broke that habit," Nelson said. He had. He had resigned when the theorists outnumbered what he called "the sane art historians." Worried that his ex-colleagues would resent his work with Roman coins, he was fond of stressing that he was not a numismatist. Dale had left with him, retaining only two loyal students who drove hours each week to work with her in the darkroom.

"Groton or no Groton, he had such an interest in knowledge that we had nothing to worry about with Nelson. I wore her down, and I was right to have done it," Jerome said. The time would never come when Jerome would not want to be thanked, one more time, for having saved Nelson—as they both thought of it—from the clutches of Groton.

"Which I thank you for," Nelson said.

"And, if I'd been around at your birth, I could have stopped her from naming you for a sea captain," Jerome said.

"Oh, Nelson is a *lovely* name," Brenda said.

"Of course, if I'd been around at your birth, people might have suspected something funny was going on," Jerome said.

"I thought you met Didi in Paris, when Nelson was five or six," Brenda said.

"He was four. He was five when we got married."

Didi had gone to Paris to study painting. Actually, she had gone to have an affair with her Theosophy instructor. That hadn't had a happy ending, though Didi had met Jerome at Les Deux Magots. No snail-like dawdling; by her own admission, she had struck with the speed of a snake.

"I didn't understand what you meant then, when you said, 'If I'd been around,' " Brenda said.

"I was just saying if. If things had been otherwise. Other than what they were. If."

"But I think you implied that you knew Didi when she gave birth. Didn't he?" Brenda said.

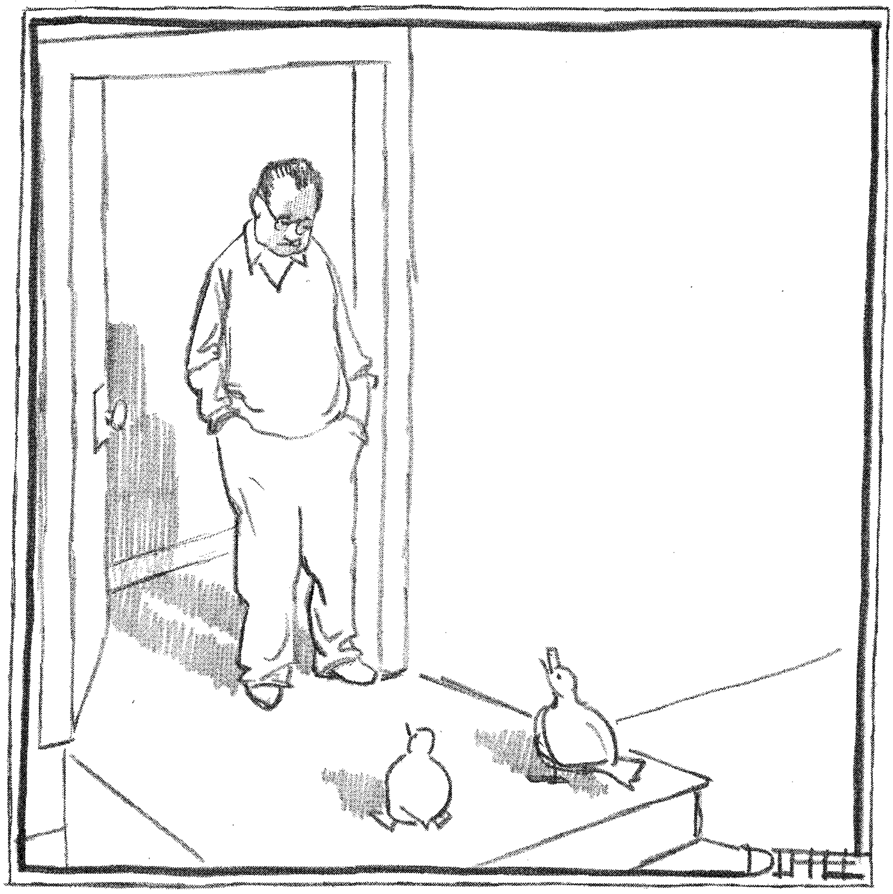
"Brenda, you were a child when all this happened. You need not be jealous," Jerome said.

"I know I should let this drop, Jerome, but it seemed sort of strange to suggest you might have been there," Brenda said. "Am I being too literal-minded again?"

"Yes," Nelson said.

"Well, no, I mean, sometimes I feel like something is being said between the lines and because I'm a newcomer I don't quite get it."

"I've lived with you for six years,



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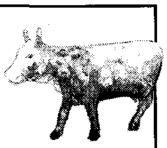

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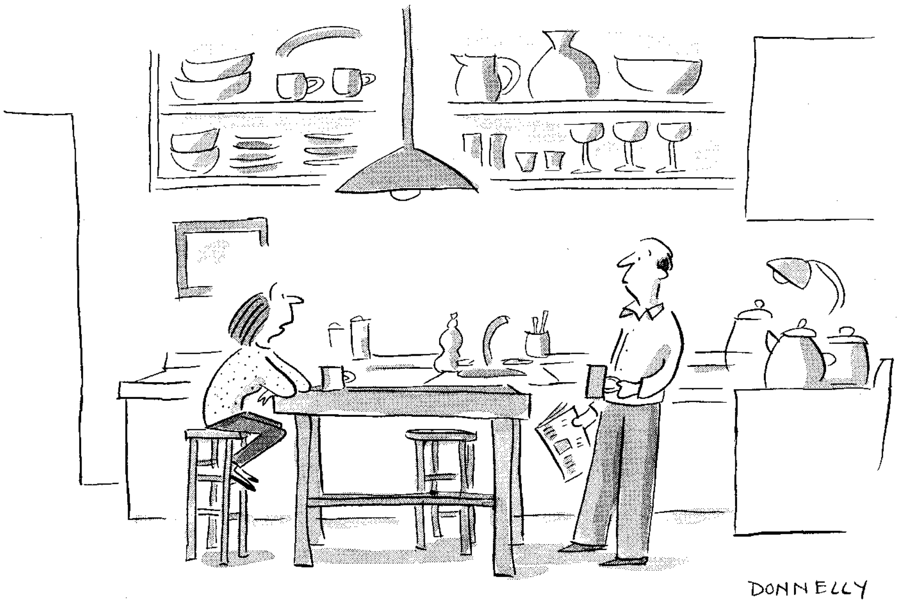

"Now that our last is off to college, could you tell me who the hell you are?"

Brenda," Jerome said. He said it with finality, as if she would do well to drop the subject if she wanted to live with him another six seconds.

Brenda said nothing. Dale gestured to the soup tureen, beside the sundial. Also on the table was a silver bowl of freshly snipped chives and a little Chinese dish, enamelled inside, that Dale had found for a quarter at a tag sale. People in the area did not value anything they were selling that was smaller than a beach ball. The Chinese dish was an antique. Inside, there was a pyramid of unsweetened whipped cream.

"Fabulous. Fabulous soup," Jerome said. "So when are you going to let me bankroll your restaurant?"

He'd wanted Dale to open a restaurant in New York for years. Jerome had all the money in the world, inherited when his parents died and left him half the state of Rhode Island. Since Jerome was a part-time stockbroker, he'd managed to invest it wisely. Back in the days before Dale showed her photographs at a gallery on Newbury Street, in Boston, it had been more difficult to dismiss Jerome's ideas.

"So how's the photography coming?" he said, when she didn't answer. Brenda was still eating her soup, not looking up.

"I've got some interesting stuff I've been working on," Dale said. "The woman down the road . . ." She gestured into the dark. Only a tiny blinking light from the bridge to Portsmouth could be seen, far in the distance. "There's one woman who lives there year-round—heating with a woodstove—and I've taken photographs. . . . Well, it always sounds so stupid, talking about what you're photographing. It's like paraphrasing a book," she said, hoping to elicit Nelson's sympathy.

"Just the general idea," Jerome said.

"Well, she does astrological charts for people, and they're really quite beautiful. And she has amazing hands, like Georgia O'Keeffe's. I've photographed her hands as she makes marks on the parchment paper. Hands say so much about a person, because you can't change your hands."

The longer she talked, the more stupid she felt.

"Have you had your chart done?" Jerome asked. The stiffness of disapproval registered in his voice.

"No," Dale said.

"I had my chart done once," Brenda said. "It was apparently very unusual, because all my moons were in one house."

Jerome looked at her. "Didi believed in astrology," he said. "She thought we were mismatched because she was a Libra and I was a Scorpio. This apparently gave her license to have an affair with a policeman."

"I'm not Didi," Brenda said flatly. She had evidently decided not to let Jerome relegate her to silence. Dale was proud of her for that.

"Will you carve the roast?" Dale said to Nelson. "I'll get the vegetables out of the oven."

She felt a little bad about leaving Brenda alone at the table with Jerome, but Nelson was much better at carving than she was. She stood and began collecting soup bowls.

"Does that woman with the earmuffs still see you?" Dale said to Brenda as she picked up her bowl. Very offhanded. As if the conversation had been going fine. It would give Brenda the excuse to rise and follow her into the kitchen, if she wanted to. But Brenda didn't do that. She said, "Yeah. I've gotten to like her a little better, but her worrying about losing body heat through her ears—you've got to wonder."

"All the world is exercising," Jerome said. "Brenda has more requests for her services than she can keep up with. The gym stays open until ten at night now on Thursdays. Do you two exercise?"

"There's an Exercycle in the downstairs bedroom. Sometimes I do it while I'm watching CNN," Nelson said.

Jerome gave his little half nod again. "And you?" he said to Dale. "Still doing the fifty situps? You're looking wonderful, I must say."

"She can't," Nelson said, answering for her. "The Ménière's thing. It screws up her inner ear if she does that sort of repetitive activity."

"Oh, I forgot," Brenda said. "How are you feeling, Dale?"

"Fine," she said. Things were better. The problem would never go away unless, of course, it spontaneously went away. Things had been so bad because the hypoglycemia complicated the problem, and that was pretty much under control, but she didn't want to talk about it.

"Remind me of what you can't eat," Jerome said. "Not that we wouldn't be too intimidated to have you to dinner anyway. Better to reciprocate at a restaurant in the city."

"You don't have to reciprocate," Dale said. "I like to cook."

"I wouldn't be intimidated," Brenda said.

"You wouldn't," he said. "I stand corrected."

"It can be a problem. When you're really good at something, no one will even try to do that thing for you," Brenda said. "There's a girl at work who gives the best massage in the world, and nobody will touch her because she's the best. The other day, I rubbed just her shoulders, and she almost swooned."

"Taking up massage also?" Jerome said.

"What do you mean, also?" Brenda said. "This is about the fact that you don't like me working late on Thursdays, isn't it? I might remind you that if a client calls, whatever time it is, it's nothing for you to be on the phone for an hour."

"No fighting!" Nelson said.

"We're not fighting," Jerome said.

"Well, you've been *trying* to provoke a fight with me," Brenda said.

"Then it was unconscious. I apologize," Jerome said.

"Oh, honey," Brenda said, getting up, putting her napkin on the table. She went around the table and hugged Jerome.

"She likes me again," Jerome said.

"We all like you," Nelson said. "I, personally, think you saved my life."

"That goes too far," Jerome said. "I just wasn't one of those stereotypically indifferent stepfathers. I considered it a real bonus that I could help raise you."

"If only you'd taught me more about electrical problems," Nelson said.

"It's toggled together, but it should hold until I get my hands on a soldering gun," Jerome said. "But seriously—Dale—what do they think the prognosis is about this thing you have?"

Roasted vegetables cascaded into the bowl. Dale put the Pyrex dish carefully into the sink and opened a drawer, looking for a serving spoon. "I'm fine," she said.

"It's complicated," Nelson said. "She eats nothing but walnuts and cheese sticks for breakfast. You think she looks good? Will she still, if she loses another fifteen pounds?"

"Cheese is full of calories," Dale said. It was going to be impossible not to talk about it until everyone else's anxiety was alleviated. She lowered her voice. "Come on, Nelson," she said. "It's boring to talk about."

"Cheese? What's with the cheese?" Jerome said.

"Honey, you are *cross-examining* her," Brenda said.

"So—here is some fresh applesauce, and here are the vegetables—I'll put them by you, Jerome—and Nelson's got the roast," Dale said, going back to her

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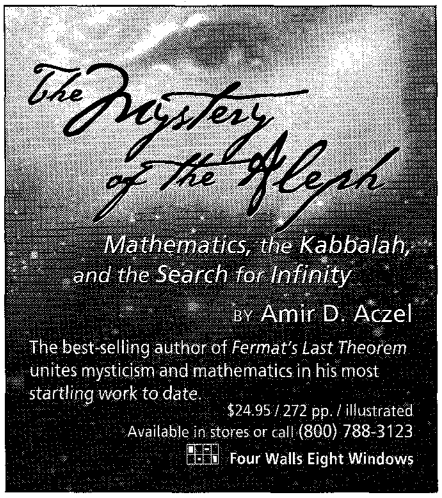

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chair. The chairs were Danish Modern, with a geometric quilted pattern on the seats. Apparently, the professor and his wife had also had a sabbatical in Denmark.

"Oh, you already had apples. I knew you would," Brenda said.

"She won't touch the applesauce. Pure sugar," Nelson said.

"Nelson," Dale said, "please stop talking about it." She asked, "Does anyone want water?"

"I think, if you don't mind, I'll have that Mâcon Lugny Les Charmes Nelson told me you laid in," Jerome said.

"Absolutely," Dale said, getting up. Nelson walked around her with the platter.

"She has some wine called Opus One for the doctor, who's coming to dinner—when is it, Thursday?" Nelson said. "We were supposed to go there for drinks, but Dale countered with dinner here. Talk about being grateful."

"What year?" Jerome said.

"It was a present," Dale said. "From a student who's married to a wine importer, so I suspect it's good."

Nelson held the platter for Brenda to serve herself.

"Has it been properly stored?" Jerome said. "That could be an excellent wine. We can only hope nothing happened to it."

Dale looked at him. As interested as he'd ostensibly been in her health, the concern about the wine was far greater. She had thought, to begin with, that being so solicitous had actually been Jerome's way of pointing out her vulnerability. Poor Dale, who might have to be stretched out on the floor any second. It fit with his concept of women.

Nelson moved to Jerome's side. He was holding the bottle. "Nineteen eighty-five," he said.

"You know, that is a very elegant wine indeed. Let me see that," Jerome said. Jerome cradled the bottle against his chest. He looked down at it, smiling. "May I, as the person who once saved your husband's life, ask what you would think about my opening this to go with dinner?" he said.

"Jerome!" Brenda said. "Give that back to Nelson."

Nelson looked at Dale, with an expression somewhere between perplexity and pleading. It was just a bottle of wine. She had no reason to think the doctor or her husband were wine connoisseurs. There was the bottle of Saint-Émilion, but it would have seemed churlish to mention it now. "Absolutely," Dale said. She pushed her chair back and went to the cupboard and took out their own stemmed glasses with a wide bowl which they had brought with them, along with her duvet and the collection of cooking magazines.

Dale put a glass at everyone's place. Jerome was smiling. "We can only hope," he said.

Brenda was looking at Dale, but Dale did not meet her eyes. She was determined to let them all see that she was unconcerned. Jerome was usually so polite.

"Tell me," he said, wine bottle clamped between his legs, turning the corkscrew. "Surely you aren't going to decline one small glass of this, Dale?"

"I can't drink," she said.

"Then what is that glass for?" he said.

"Perrier," she said, pronouncing the word very distinctly.

Jerome looked attentively at the bottle as he slowly withdrew the cork. He picked up the bottle slowly and sniffed. Then he put his white linen napkin over his finger and worked it around the top, inside the bottle. That was the first time it became clear to her that he was doing what he was doing out of anger. She picked up her fork and speared a piece of eggplant.

"You've fallen silent, Dale," he said. "Is everything all right?"

"Yes," she said, trying to sound mildly surprised.

"It's just that you're so quiet." He persisted.

Brenda seemed about to speak, but said nothing. Dale managed a shrug. "I hope there are enough spices on the vegetables," she said. "I roasted them without salt. Would anyone like salt?"

Of course, since they had all now turned their attention to Dale, whatever she said sounded false and shallow.

"I appreciate your laying in Mâcon Lugny for me," Jerome went on. "In most cases, white would go well with pork roast. But an '85 Opus One—that, of course, is completely divine." Jerome sniffed the bottle. It might have been snuff, he inhaled so deeply. Then he set the bottle on the table, near the sundial. "Let it breathe for a moment," he said.

He turned his chair at an angle, feigning closeness with Dale.

Dale picked up a piece of carrot with her fingers and bit into it. She said nothing.

“You had Didi to dinner last month with some friends of yours, I hear,” he said.

Who had told him, since he and Didi didn’t speak? Nelson, obviously. Why?

“Yes,” Dale said.

Jerome took a bite of meat and a bite of vegetable. He reached for the applesauce and ladled some onto his plate. He said nothing about the food.

“I understand you’ve made a portrait of her,” he said.

Brenda was chewing slowly. She knew, and Dale knew, that Jerome was warming up to something. In fact, Dale herself didn’t much like Didi—in part because they seemed to have little in common. On top of that, Didi condescended by acting as if Dale were the sophisticate, and she—the world traveller—just a poor old lady. Dale had thought that photographing her—in spite of the momentary imbalance of power—might ultimately get the two of them on a more even footing.

Jerome said, “I’d be curious to see it.”

“No,” Dale said.

“No? Why ever not?” Jerome said.

“You don’t like your ex-wife,” she said. “There’s no reason to look at a picture of her.”

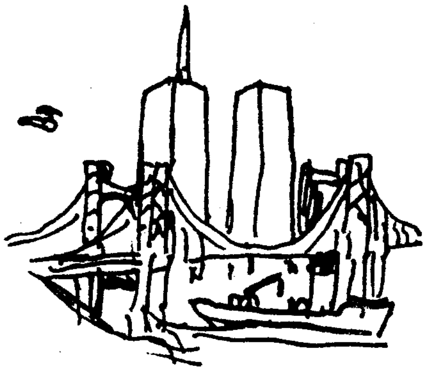
“Listen to her!” Jerome said, jutting his chin in Nelson’s direction.

“Jerome—what’s wrong?” Nelson said quietly.

“What’s wrong? There’s something wrong about my request to see a photograph? I have curiosity about what Didi looks like. We were married for years, you’ll remember.”

“I don’t want to see it,” Brenda said.

“You don’t have to. If you don’t want any of the wine, you don’t have to have that, either.” Jerome twirled the bottle. As the label revolved in front of him, he picked up the bottle and poured. A thin stream of wine went into the glass.



“I don’t quite see how not wanting to look at a photograph of your ex means I don’t want wine,” Brenda said.

“You prefer white. Isn’t that so?” Jerome said.

“Usually. But you made this wine sound very good.”

“It’s good, but not great,” Jerome said, inhaling. He had not yet taken a sip. He swirled the wine in his glass, then put the glass to his lips and slowly tilted it back. “Mmm,” he said. He nodded. “Quite good, but not perfect,” he said. He cut a piece of roast.

Nelson kept his eyes on Dale, who was intent upon not looking at Brenda. Brenda was doing worse than anyone else with Jerome’s behavior. “May I talk to you in the kitchen?” Brenda said to Jerome.

“Oh, just take me to task right here. In the great tradition of Didi, who never lowered her voice or avoided any confrontation.”

“I’m not Didi,” Brenda said. “What I want to know is whether you’re acting this way because you’re pissed off I have a job I enjoy and that means I’m not there to answer your every whim, or whether there’s some real bone you have to pick with Dale.”

“Forget it,” Nelson said. “Come on. Dale has made this wonderful meal.”

“Don’t tell me what not to say to Jerome,” Brenda said.

“Let’s take another walk and cool off,” Dale said to Brenda. “Maybe they’d like to talk. Maybe we could use some air.”

“All right,” Brenda said, surprising Dale. She had thought Brenda would dig her heels in, but she seemed relieved by the suggestion. She got up and walked through the kitchen and into the hallway where the coats were hung. In the dark, she put on Dale’s jacket instead of her own. Dale noticed, but since they were the same size she put on Brenda’s without comment. Outside, Brenda realized her error when she plunged her hand in the pocket and felt the doughnut holes. “Oh, this is yours,” she said, and began to unzip the jacket.

“We wear the same size. Keep it on,” Dale said. Brenda looked at her, making

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sure she meant it. Then she took her fingers off the zipper. As they walked, Brenda began apologizing for Jerome, though she said she'd only been guessing, back at the house. She didn't really know what he was so angry about, though she assumed they knew that he was more fond of them than of his own children—these being the daughter he'd had by the woman between Didi and Brenda, and the son whose mother was married to someone else. "He had a couple of beers on the plane. They took a bottle upstairs when they went to fix the wiring, too. Maybe he just had too much to drink," Brenda said.

"It doesn't matter," Dale said. She pointed at the Portsmouth light. "I like that," she said. "In the evening I like the colorful sky, but at night I like that one little light almost as much."

Dale tried to look at her watch, but couldn't read it. "Too late to round up Tyrone," she said. She knew that it was, even without being able to see the time. In the distance, wind rustled the willows. They were walking where the path turned and narrowed, between the divided field. It was Dale and Nelson's responsibility, as renters, to have the fields plowed, so the scrub wouldn't take over. In the distance, you could hear the white noise of cars on the highway. That, and the wind rustling, disguised the sound of tires until a black car with its headlights off was almost upon them. Brenda clutched Dale's arm as she jumped in fear, moving so quickly into the grass in her high-heeled boots that she lost her balance and fell, toppling both herself and Dale. "Oh, shit, my ankle," she said. "Oh, no." Both were sprawled in the field, the hoarfrost on the grass crunching like wintry quicksand as they struggled to stand. A car without headlights? And after nearly sideswiping them, it accelerated. The big shadow of the car moved quickly away, crunching stones more loudly as it receded than it had on the approach.

Brenda had turned her ankle. Dale helped her up, dusting wetness from her own jacket on Brenda's back, wanting to delay the moment when Brenda would say she couldn't walk. "Some God-damned maniac," Dale said. "Can you put pressure on it? How does it feel?"

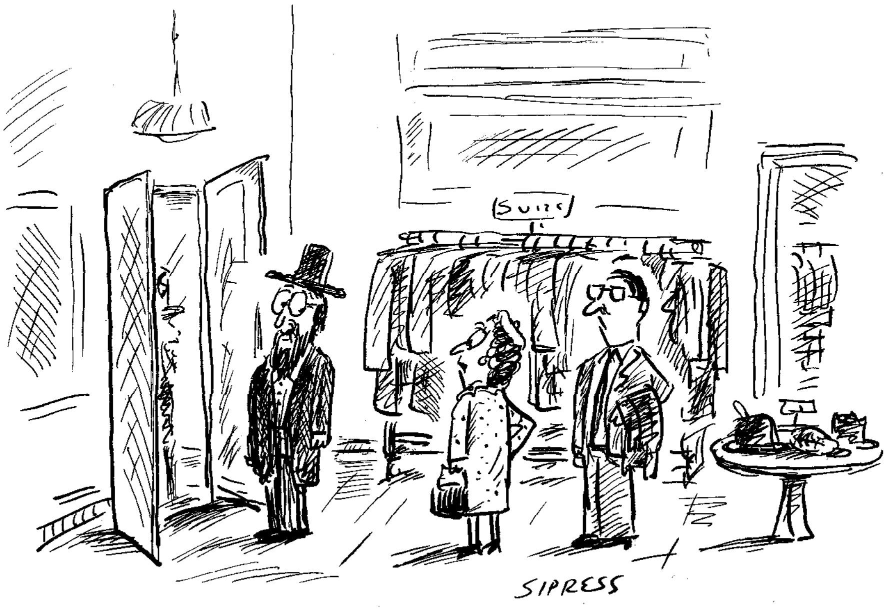
"It hurts, but I don't think it's broken," Brenda said.

Dale looked into the distance, Brenda's hand still on her shoulder. "Shit," Brenda said again. "I'd better take these things off and walk home in my tights. You know, if I didn't know better, I'd say that that was Jerome, zeroing in for the kill."

Kill. With a worse chill than the night air explained, Dale had realized that the car must have been speeding away from Janet's house. That they would have to go on—she, at least, would have to go on—and see what had happened.

"It's something bad—" Dale began.

"I know," Brenda said, crying now. "But the worst thing is that I'm preg-



"Too Jewish?"

nant, and I don't dare tell him, he's been so shitty lately. It's like he hates me. I feel like he'd like it if my ankle was broken."

"No," Dale said, hearing what Brenda said, but not quite hearing it. "Something at the house down there. Janet's house."

Brenda's hand seized Dale's shoulder. "Oh, my God," she said.

"Wait here," Dale said.

"No! I'm coming with you," Brenda told her.

"I've got a very bad feeling," Dale said.

"We don't know," Brenda said. "It could have been kids—drunk, playing a game with the lights out." From the tenuous way she spoke, it was clear she didn't believe herself.

Slowly, helping her to walk, Brenda's boots in one of her hands, the other around Brenda's waist, Dale moved forward with Brenda until the little house came in sight. "Not exactly a wedding cake," Brenda said, squinting at what was hardly more than a clapboard shack. There was one light on, which was an ambiguous sign: it could be good, or it could mean nothing at all.

The front door slightly ajar was the worst possible sign. Dale surprised herself by having the courage to push it open. Inside, the wood fire had burned out. A cushion was on the floor. A mug lay near it, in a puddle of whatever had been inside. The house was horribly, eerily silent. It was rare that Dale found herself surrounded by silence.

"Janet?" Dale said. "It's Dale. Janet?"

She was on the kitchen floor. They saw her when Dale turned on the light. Janet was breathing shallowly, a small trickle of blood congealed at one side of her mouth. Dale's impulse was to gather Janet in her arms, but she knew she should not move her head. "Janet? Everything's going to be O.K.," she heard herself say dully. She meant to be emphatic, but instead her voice was monotonic. Her ears had begun to close—a warning that she would soon have an attack of vertigo. But why? She had drunk no wine; she had eaten no sugar. Panic attacks had been ruled out when Ménière's had been ruled in. "You must learn the power of positive thinking," she heard the doctor saying to her. "I know it sounds ridiculous, but it works. I'm not a mystical person. It's more like biofeedback. Say to yourself, 'This will not happen to me.' "

The room was quivering, as if the walls themselves were vibrating because of some tremor in the earth. Dale repeated the words, silently. She could see Janet's chest rising and falling. Her breathing did not seem to be labored, though whoever had been there had evidently tried to strangle her with a piece of rope. From the color of her face, it was obvious she had been deprived of oxygen. Her long fingers were balled into fists. Blood oozed from a cut on her arm. An ankh dangled from one end of the rope. The "Dictionary of Symbols" lay on the floor, a blood-smudged chart beside it. Beside that, torn from the wall, was a photograph Dale had taken of Janet's hand holding the fine pearwood-handled brush she used to draw symbols. The photograph had been ripped so that the brush was broken in half. Remembering, suddenly, what she must do, Dale went to the wall phone and dialled 911. "Someone is unconscious at the end of Harmony Lane," she said. It was difficult to tell how loud or soft her words were. Harmony Lane—was that what she had just said? What ridiculous place was that? Some fake street in some ridiculous Walt Disney development? But no—they hadn't gone there. They had rented a house in Maine, that was where they were. She squinted against the star shining through the kitchen window like a bright dart aimed at her eye. It was not a star, though. It was the light from Portsmouth.

The woman who answered told Dale to stay calm. She insisted she stay where she was. It was as if all this were about Dale—not Janet, but Dale, standing in Janet's kitchen. For a second, the voice of the woman at 911 got confused with the voice of the doctor saying, This will not happen to me.

There was a shriek of sirens. They sounded far, far away, yet distinct: background music that portended trouble. Dale was so stunned that, instead of hanging up, she stood with the phone in her hand, imagining she'd hung up. She had seen Janet two days before. Three? They had talked about squash. The squash Janet would appreciate Dale's buying for her at the Farmers' Market. "This is her neighbor, Dale," she said, in what she thought was an answer to the question the woman was asking, faintly, on the opposite end of the phone. Why didn't the woman ask about Janet? "We

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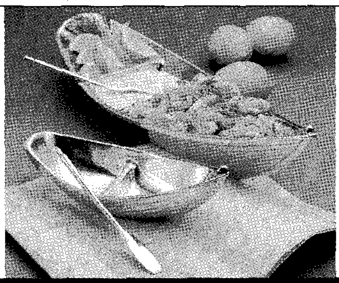

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saw a car," she heard herself say, though her mouth was not near enough to the receiver for the 911 operator to hear.

That was the moment when Tyrone burst out from underneath the two-seat sofa, charging so hard he overshot Dale and knocked Brenda down. She screamed with fear long after she might have realized it was only a dog. Tyrone was as afraid as they were; everything was made worse by Brenda's high-pitched scream.

"Oh, God, I'm so sorry," Brenda said, apologizing to the cowering dog, his back legs shaking so pathetically Dale could not see how he remained upright. "Oh, God, here," Brenda said, inching closer, reaching in the jacket pocket with a trembling hand for a doughnut hole and holding it out to the dog, who did *not* approach but stood shakily leaning into Dale's leg. No one looked at Janet's body. Wind rattled the glass, but the louder sound was that of sirens. Dale saw Brenda cock her head and turn, as if she could see the sound. Brenda turned back and threw the doughnut hole to the dog, missing by a mile.

"It's O.K.," Dale said, moving her leg astride the dog and edging the doughnut hole toward him with the toe of her boot. It was a powdered-sugar doughnut hole that left a streak of white on the floorboards. By Janet's hand had been a streak—no: a puddle, not a streak—of blood. Dale did not look in that direction; she was so afraid Janet might have stopped breathing.

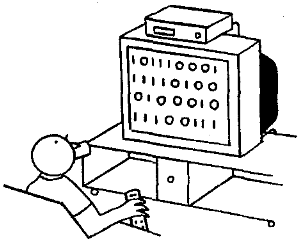
Dale looked across the room at Brenda. Brenda, dejectedly, was about to throw another doughnut hole. Dale watched as Brenda tossed it slowly, repeating Dale's words: "It's O.K." Then Brenda took a step forward and said to Dale, "Make him forgive me. Make him like me again."

Dale was stroking Tyrone's head. Tyrone had become her dog. Brenda and Jerome's child, she thought, would become Brenda's child. All of Jerome's women had wanted babies, and he had bitterly resented every one: the son born to the married woman in France, whose husband believed the child to be his; the daughter born as his marriage to his second wife was disintegrating. Nelson had been the only one he wanted. Well—if you had what you already considered the perfect child, maybe that made sense. Nelson was intellectually curious, smart, obedient, favoring his stepfather over his mother, a loyal child.

Nelson and Jerome would be at the table, finishing dinner, Nelson having found a way to excuse Jerome, Jerome's passive aggression subsiding into agreeableness—as if, by the two women's disappearing, any problem automatically disappeared, too. Without them, Nelson and Jerome could move on to the salad course. Drink the entire bottle of Opus One. Nelson would probably have brought down the photograph of Didi, her face deeply lined by years of having kept up with Jerome in his drinking, as well as by other bad decisions she had made, and of course from the years at Saint-Tropez, enjoying too much sun.

Too much sun. Too much son. Jerome would like to play with that.

Though what Jerome was talking about, having already told Nelson he was seriously considering separating from Brenda, was the story of Baron Philippe de Rothschild: The baron, being a clever businessman, and, more important, a visionary, realized that much might be gained by joining forces with the California wine grower Robert Mondavi. Mondavi was invited to the Baron's, where both men dined on fabulous food and drank great wine. It was a social evening: business was not discussed. It was not until the next morning that the Baron—by this point Mondavi genuinely admired him, for his taste, elegance, and good manners—summoned Mondavi to his bedside, like a character in a fairy tale. The possibility of combining their efforts was discussed, and of sharing the profits fifty-fifty. Mondavi suggested producing only one wine, which would be similar to a great Bordeaux. Did he say this tentatively? The Baron agreed. Would he have said the same? The wine would be made in California, where the Baron's winemaker would visit. Mondavi, flattered, was thrilled as well. His name linked to that of Baron Philippe de Rothschild! The Baron also triumphed, realizing that embracing his would-be adversary would lead both men to profit. Nothing remained except the ceremonial drinking of a hundred-year-old Mouton, followed by a very cold Château d'Yquem: a perfect deal; a perfect meal—it even rhymed, as Jerome pointed out. A brilliant label was designed, providing the perfect finishing touch.



The talk back at the house was about perfection. In a perfect world, all wines would be perfect. Ditto marriages. All books brilliant (a toast was drunk). Superior music (again, glasses were raised) would be listened to, keenly. In that fairy tale, which was not Dale's, and which was not Brenda's, either, no woman would lie badly wounded on her kitchen floor.

Brenda crossed the room and stood at Dale's side. "Doughnut hole," she said quietly, looking down, then picked it up, at the end of its trail of powdered sugar, as if plucking a shooting star from the darkness.

This time, Tyrone showed interest. Dale picked up the other two. The dog was definitely interested now. There was no dirt on the doughnut holes that Dale and Brenda could see, as they examined them closely.

"Why not?" Dale said, giving voice to what Brenda was thinking. They could pretend to be people at a cocktail party, eating pleasant tidbits.

But sirens pierced the night.

They signified a problem for someone, Nelson knew. Another problem, Jerome also thought.

The sound overwhelmed Bartók on the stereo. The sirens were shrill and constant: a sound you might say was annoyingly like a woman's voice—if one could still say such things, but of course one could not.

Then the crescendo of noise, demanding their attention.

One man preceded the other out of the house. That door, too, was left open to the wind.

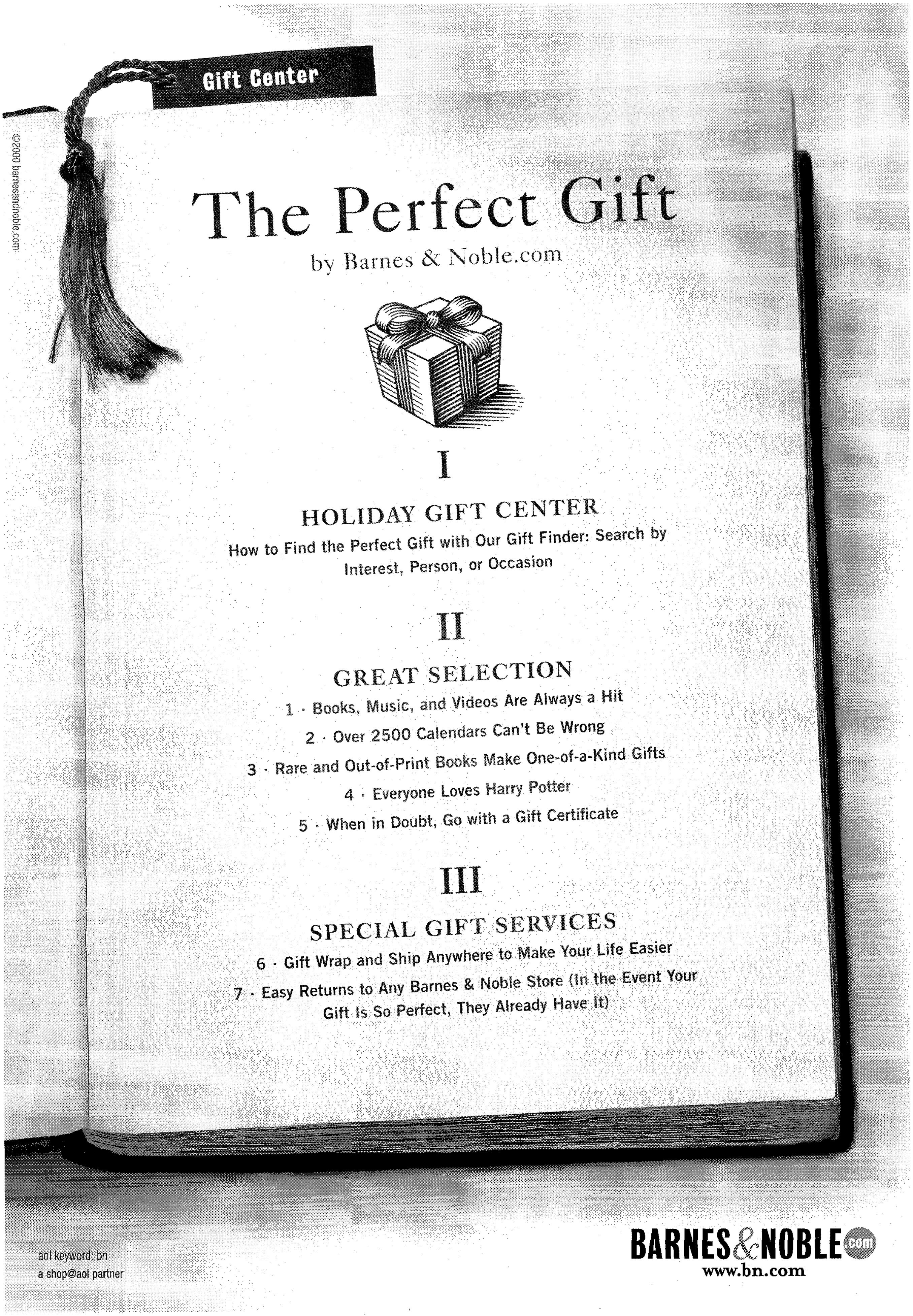
A police car, a second police car, an ambulance, a fire engine—the full militia leading the way.

To what? The two words were like a heartbeat: *to what, to what.*

Down a dirt road in a country far from France.

Down a narrow road across from a rented house.

The meal left behind, one or the other having remembered to extinguish the candles. ♦



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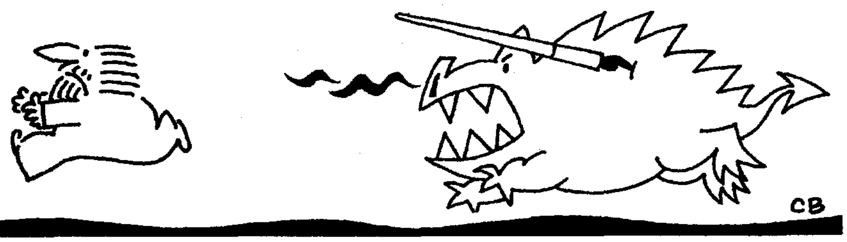


BOOKS

SCALING MT. KENNEDY

R.F.K.'s journey from fixer to martyrdom.

BY HENDRIK HERTZBERG

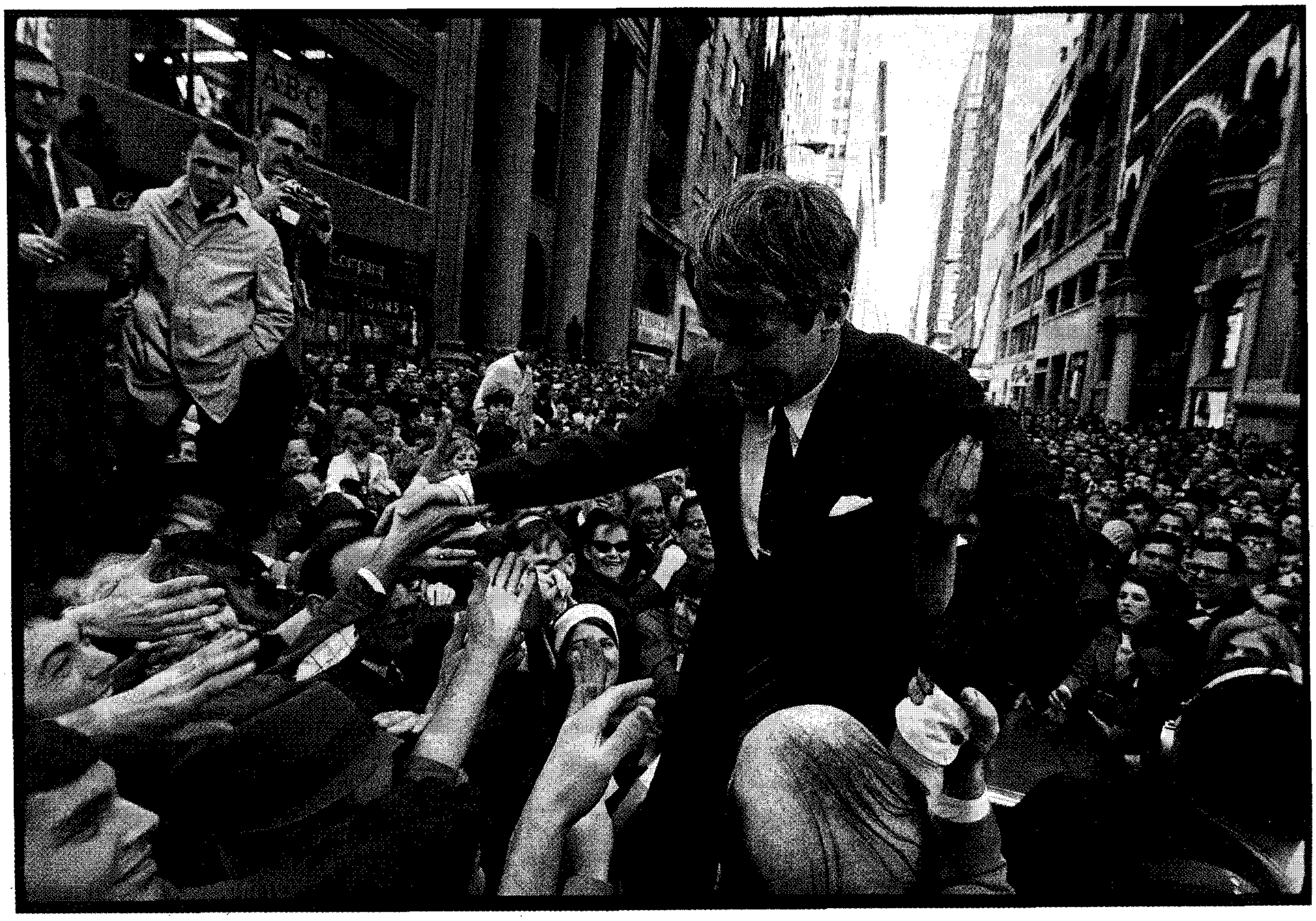
In an early chapter of "Robert Kennedy: His Life" (Simon & Schuster; $28), Evan Thomas notes that in 1952, when Bobby Kennedy, then twenty-six, was in charge of John F. Kennedy's campaign for the Massachusetts Senate seat held by Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., no detail was too small for the personal attention of the candidate's kid brother and campaign manager. Bobby, Thomas writes, "would personally go door to door handing out a campaign tabloid newspaper extolling J.F.K.'s virtues, which he had ordered printed up at great expense."

Reading this, I felt a jolt. In the spring of 1968, I was only a little younger than Bobby Kennedy was in 1952. By day, I was a lieutenant, junior grade, in the Navy, stationed, thanks to some slipup in the Pentagon, in a sleepy office in lower Manhattan; by night and on weekends, I atoned for my complicity in the Vietnam War effort, ludicrously marginal though it was, by doing grunt work for antiwar causes. As part of that, I was spending some furtive time as a low-level volunteer in the New York storefront headquarters of the Robert Kennedy for President campaign. My task was to do layout and write headlines for—a campaign tabloid newspaper extolling R.F.K.'s virtues. I assumed then, and had assumed since, that our tabloid, which we called the *Kennedy Current*, was the brainchild of one of the harried strategists whom we occasionally glimpsed dashing upstairs to a bank of offices on a mezzanine overlooking the main space. Now I wonder if the person who ordered our little paper printed up at great expense wasn't Bobby himself. Glory!

If you were more or less young, more or less on the left, and more or less active in the peace movement in 1968, then you had strong feelings about Bobby Kennedy. If you hated him (a majority sentiment, if the peaceniks I knew were a fair sample), you saw him as a preeningly "tough," calculating, bloody-minded young man (the shorthand was "ruthless") who had amply proved that he would stop at nothing to serve his family's will to power, and who, unlike his Senate colleague Eugene McCarthy, had refused to challenge Lyndon Johnson when it really counted. If you loved Bobby, you didn't necessarily disagree with any of that. But you also thought that he knew these things about himself. And you thought that he had changed, especially after his brother's assassination, and was changing still—that the unimaginable wave of grief and loss that engulfed him after November 22, 1963, had washed him as if in the blood of the lamb, after which he had climbed out of despair to find his true voice in solidarity with those who were suffering from and struggling against war, racism, and poverty. In the present climate of complacency and protective irony, it sounds corny. It didn't seem that way then. It was thrilling.

Bobby Kennedy was a wildly romantic figure in 1968, and the mean, hard chrysalis from which he had emerged only made him seem more so. He was at once slight and strong, with pale-blue eyes full, alternately, of hurt, anger, and curiosity, and a shock of dark hair that he'd push back from his forehead as he shyly ducked his head. It was a year of fearful portents and strange exhilarations. Everything—on every scale, from the global to the personal—seemed to be coming unmoored. The sweep of events was like a hurricane. War in Vietnam and antiwar uprisings on American streets and campuses, insurrections in France, Mexico, and Czechoslovakia, the transfiguring martyrdom of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the burning cities afterward—these public turmoils and many more had their private analogues in millions of individual psyches. To many of us, Bobby Kennedy's appeal was that he seemed open to all of it, that he seemed both defenseless and defiant, that he seemed to be rushing toward his feelings, that he had lifted his feet from the ground and was ready to ride the hurricane to an unknown and unknowable destination. We were projecting, of course. But so what? (According to Evan Thomas, Bobby couldn't stand his campaign poster—the same poster, by the way, that has hung on my living-room wall these thirty-two years. He thought it made him look like a guitar player. We thought so, too.)

The R.F.K. phenomenon has prompted the writing of a lot of prose. It inspired David Halberstam, Jack Newfield, and Peter Maas to do some of their strongest work; Halberstam's "The Unfinished Odyssey of Robert Kennedy" (1968) is especially fine. The best of the Bobby books remains, and probably will always remain, "Robert Kennedy and His Times," by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., published in 1978. Its nine hundred-plus beautifully written pages combine the virtues of memoir, biography, and history, giving it the crystalline depth of field of an Ansel Adams photograph. Thomas's book is less than half the length of Schlesinger's; it necessarily leaves out a lot, especially the richly textured context of events through which Schlesinger's Kennedy moves. But it has something to add, too—not only the cool perspective of time but also quantities of new information, some of it the fruit of Thomas's own research. Thomas is an experienced biographer and, as *Newsweek's* main man in Washington for ten years, an accomplished political journalist. His style is clear, a little homely, and anything but overwrought, and this allows the almost operatic nature of the tale he tells to speak for itself. Much of his story was invisible to the public eye as it was happening, and has emerged only in recent years. He is respectful of evidence and measured in his judgments. He is neither an apologist nor a debunker. But his portrait of what it was like to grow up in the Kennedy clan is fraught with more unhappiness and anxiety than that of earlier biographers. And he shows that the secret side of the Kennedy Administration—the obsession with Cuba, especially Bobby's, and the immense dangers posed by J.F.K.'s sexual recklessness, which it was part of Bobby's job to conceal—sometimes distorted its priorities and stunted its possibilities. Thomas's spareness makes the story sad—sadder, maybe, than it really deserves to be.



Every advantage had to be earned. Robert F. Kennedy campaigning in Philadelphia in 1968.

BURT GLINN/MAGNUM

Most people's lives, if plotted as a graph with time and intensity as axes, would look like a bell curve, climbing toward a smooth hillock of accomplishment and then trailing down gently into old age. Robert Kennedy's would look like one of those scary diagrams of the population explosion, rising gradually at first and then zooming exponentially off the chart; the unbelievably eventful period from his brother's election as President to his night of victory and death after the California primary covered a span of years shorter than the Clinton Administration. He barely reached middle, let alone old, age. He was forty-two when he was murdered.

Robert Francis Kennedy, born on November 20, 1925, was the third of Joseph P. Kennedy's four sons and the seventh of his nine children. He was a sweet child, so much so that his father initially wrote him off as a mama's boy. As an adolescent, he was pious, moody, touchy, and a little lonely. Struggling to compete, he was given to reckless gestures: once, before he knew how to swim, he jumped off a sailboat into the sea and had to be rescued by his brother Joe, prompting Jack to remark, "It showed either a lot of guts or no sense at all, depending on how you looked at it." At a succession of boarding schools, he was an outsider with a chip on his shoulder. At Milton, where he landed after withdrawing from Portsmouth Priory under suspicion of cheating on an exam, he found comfort in a close friendship with David Hackett, a football hero and "schoolboy god" who would become the model for the main character of John Knowles's novel "A Separate Peace." But Bobby was never part of the in-crowd, either at school or at home, where he was outshone by the glowing trio of Joe, Jr., Jack, and Kathleen, the second-oldest sister.

To anyone from a normal or, at least, relatively typical home, the pressures of growing up in the Kennedy clan—that was the word they themselves used, often with a touch of irony—can only be guessed at. This was a family in which wealth and fame were taken for granted, yet every advantage had to be earned, through constant displays of courage and determination. Failure was unthinkable. The father's ethic of compet-

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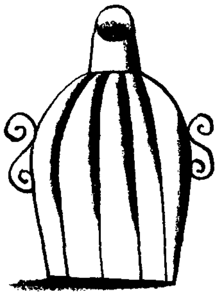
itiveness pitted the children against each other and the clan against the world. That there were secrets to be kept—the shadowy sources of the family's wealth, the father's string of mistresses (including Gloria Swanson), the botched lobotomy that destroyed the brain of Rosemary, the eldest sister—only increased the clan's sense of wary exceptionalism. By the time of Pearl Harbor, when Bobby was sixteen, Joe, Sr., who had supported Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasing the Nazis, had been forced out as President Roosevelt's Ambassador to Britain and had transferred his ambitions to his sons. The eldest, the gregarious Joe, Jr., was the one designated for politics, although Jack had already made a down payment on the family's political rehabilitation: at twenty-three, he was famous as the author of an implicitly pro-intervention tract, "Why England Slept," his Harvard senior thesis turned (with the help of Arthur Krock, of the *Times*) best-selling book. By 1946, Jack was more famous still; his PT-109 exploits had been chronicled by John Hersey in this magazine, and he was running for Congress. Joe, Jr., was dead. He had volunteered to fly a bomber full of high explosives on a one-way trip to a German rocket base on the French coast; he was supposed to bail out before impact, but his plane exploded shortly after takeoff. He had died in the service not only of his country but also of his father's harsh ethic: he was trying at once to vindicate the family and to outdo Jack within it. Bobby, for his part, had joined the Navy in 1943, just after his eighteenth birthday, and combined officer training with studies at Harvard. But he washed out of flight school as the war was ending, and it was over by the time he went on active duty—as an enlisted man aboard a destroyer named for his dead brother.

Jack and Bobby could hardly have been more different. Jack dealt with the pressures of being a son of Joseph Kennedy by keeping the patriarch at arm's length; Bobby did so by trying to please him. Jack's strategy was ironic detachment; Bobby's was humorless loyalty. Jack's Catholicism was nominal, Bobby's fervent. Jack was the clan's prince, Bobby its foot soldier. The differences showed in, among other ways, their relations with women—a topic on which, unsurprisingly, Thomas is franker than Schlesinger. Thomas writes that, according to Lem Billings, Jack's roommate from Choate, the two brothers lost their virginity, years apart, at the same Harlem whorehouse; Billings accompanied Bobby to the establishment, paid the bill, and was reimbursed by Joe, Sr. But there were few other parallels. Jack was elusive, glamorous, relaxed; he had many liaisons, often simultaneously. Bobby was bashful, at once tense and intense, a little priggish. Bobby's "first true love," a Lauren Bacall look-alike named K.K. Hannon, told Thomas many years later that Bobby had been "wry and very dear. He was interested in everything, curious. He didn't have good manners, but he tried. He was like a ten-year-old in a grown-up's suit." Bobby asked her to marry him; she gently put him off. Some time later, as the two walked down a Boston street on the way to the movies, they ran into Jack, who took one look at K.K. and invited himself along. "The next morning," K.K. told Thomas, "Jack called up. I thought he was terrific. That was the end of Bobby. It was very awkward." Bobby showed no anger at this exercise of *droit du seigneur*. He simply deferred.

Thomas tells of another failed romance, one that occurred in the spring of 1948, while Bobby was touring Europe alone before starting law school at the University of Virginia. Kathleen—the most beautiful, spirited, and independent of the Kennedy girls, who went by the marvellous nickname of Kick, and whose husband, an English aristocrat, had died in the war—had just been killed in a plane crash. Thomas writes:

> In deep mourning, Kennedy wandered on to London, where he gloomily attended a popular play called "The Chiltern Hundreds." The play was based partly on the much-publicized drama of Kathleen's mar-



riage, outside the faith and against her mother's wishes, to the son of the Duke of Devonshire. In the starring role—as the American millionairess who marries the son of an earl—was a blond twenty-seven-year-old actress named Joan Winmill. Smitten, Kennedy asked Winmill out to dinner the next night. She later recalled his boyishness—his freckles and toothy smile—and the intensity of his stare. The two began a secretive and slightly lugubrious romance, visiting Kathleen's grave and her late husband's ancestral home, Chatsworth. Inevitably, Joe, Sr., found out and disapproved. He would not have his son marry a showgirl. Promising he would return, Bobby said goodbye to Winmill in August. According to Winmill's memoirs, Bobby wrote her often, sending her chocolates and perfume and hand-me-down dresses with expensive labels from his sisters. She considered herself "in love," she later wrote, until she received a letter from him in the summer of 1949. The letter said, "I am getting married to Ethel Skakel."

It's an astonishingly suggestive episode, like a dream in the way it smashes and rearranges elements of the family's (especially the father's) experience, and in its intimations of repressed or forbidden fantasies—of escape, of resurrection, even of incest. Thomas simply records it, leaving the interpretation to the reader. In any case, Bobby, with his marriage to a woman whose devotion to him was total and uncomplicated, founded a clan of his own, one that eventually surpassed the patriarch's in size. (In the brothers' division of the father's labor, it was Jack who specialized in showgirls.)

In law school, Bobby earned a reputation for rudeness and pugnacity. He invited his father's friend Joseph McCarthy to speak there. But he also invited Ralph Bunche, the black American diplomat who had won a Nobel Peace Prize as a United Nations negotiator. The university was all white, and its seat, Charlottesville, was a Jim Crow town. Bunche stipulated that he would not speak to a segregated audience, and Kennedy insisted that the meeting be integrated and open to the public. When other student leaders hesitated, he told them they were "gutless"—a favorite word of his. Addressing the university's governing board, he grew angry to the point of incoherence. He got his way.

Jack's 1952 Senate race brought the two brothers together in a sustained fashion for the first time and prefigured the genuine closeness that would begin to develop eight years later. "J.F.K. liked to remain above the fray, coolly elegant and sardonic," Thomas writes. "He let Bobby deal with the hacks and favor-seekers, as well as run interference with their father." The governor of Massachusetts, Paul Dever, who was running for reëlection on the same ticket, observed that Jack was the first Irish Brahmin and Bobby the last Irish puritan. It was a Republican year—Dever lost, and General Eisenhower swept the state—but the Kennedys had built their own organization, separate from the Democratic machine, and Jack won by a hair.

For most of Jack's eight years in the Senate, Bobby was down the hall, as a lawyer on the staff of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. His father got him the job, and his initial stint with the committee, when he worked for its Republican chairman, Joseph McCarthy, earned him the lasting mistrust of many liberals. But the work he did, Thomas says, was conscientious and, except by association, unsullied by McCarthy's demagoguery and falsehoods. Bobby's attachment to McCarthy was more personal than ideological. McCarthy had been a visitor to the family compound in Hyannis Port, even an occasional escort of Bobby's sisters Jean and Pat. (Jean recalled his M.O. as a half-hour of chitchat about Commies followed by abrupt, "very hard" kissing. Ugh.) McCarthy's roughhewn Irishness, his unsophisticated Catholicism, and his resentment of the establishment élite appealed to the truculent adolescent in Bobby. (They did nothing for Jack, who advised his brother against taking the job.) After five months, Bobby quit, frustrated by having to work under McCarthy's chief counsel, the reptilian Roy Cohn. He returned after a brief hiatus, but it was as counsel to the Democratic minority, and his principal antagonist was not some real or imagined Communist but Cohn. The two nearly came to blows during one well-publicized altercation, and Kennedy, by helping Democratic senators like Henry Jackson to bait Cohn during the climactic Army-McCarthy hearings of 1954, actually contributed to McCarthy's downfall. But he continued to defend McCarthy to his appalled friends; one of them, Kenneth O'Donnell, blew up at him at the 1954 Harvard-Yale game, shouting, "What

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"I bark, I get fed. That works for me."

the hell is wrong with you?" Bobby's obtuseness about McCarthy reflected not only his temperament but his upbringing; the clan's insularity and the father's prejudices weighed more heavily on Bobby than on Jack. It took him more than a decade to admit that he had simply been wrong.

When the Democrats recaptured the Senate in the 1954 elections, the committee—urged on by its new chief counsel, Robert Kennedy—shifted its attention to organized crime and labor racketeering, and Kennedy began his long pursuit of Jimmy Hoffa, the thuggish leader of the Teamsters Union. Joe, Sr., objected bitterly to this tack, and Thomas credits Doris Kearns Goodwin's view that there was an Oedipal element in it. It was Bobby's declaration of independence, and it was so successful that his fame—aided by his own best-selling book about it, "The Enemy Within"—soon eclipsed that of all but a handful of senators and rivalled his brother's. Nevertheless, when J.F.K. announced for President, Bobby dropped everything to manage the campaign.

It was another of Joe, Sr.,'s ideas that Bobby should be Attorney General. The President-elect took a lot of political heat over it, but the fact that Bobby's confirmation was never in doubt shows how profound have been the changes over the past four decades. It would be simply inconceivable for a new President in this new century to announce that he was appointing to his Cabinet as the nation's chief law-enforcement officer a person who was (a) his little brother, (b) his campaign manager, (c) barely thirty-five years of age, and (d) wholly without experience in the practice of law. Yet Robert Kennedy turned out to be one of the most energetic and effective Attorneys General ever, with a first-rate staff that included Byron White, Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, Burke Marshall, Archibald Cox, John Doar, John Seigenthaler, and Edwin Guthman. He drove them as hard as he drove himself, and he earned their devotion and respect.

The role Bobby played was unique in the history of the Presidency, unprecedented and unrepeatable. After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, which took place three months after the Inauguration and shook J.F.K.'s confidence in his advisers, Bobby's writ expanded, especially in foreign policy. Because the principal crises in the Kennedy Administration concerned either foreign policy or civil rights, and because the personal and political trust between the brothers was very nearly total, Bobby became a kind of informal deputy President.

In Thomas's account of the White House years, three often interweaving themes stand out: Bobby Kennedy's almost pathological obsession with Cuba, his growing understanding of and, finally, identification with the civil-rights movement, and his uneasy relationship with his nominal subordinate J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

R.F.K.'s fixation on punishing Fidel Castro produced a plethora of covert (and unsuccessful) sabotage plots and off-the-books task forces with schoolboy names like the Special Group (Augmented) and Operation Mongoose. The C.I.A.'s notorious attempts to use American gangsters to assassinate Castro predated the Kennedys but did not end with their arrival. Thomas painstakingly sifts through the evidence, concluding that if the Kennedys did not know of the assassination intrigues, as seems probable, it was because they chose not to know, and that Bobby's personal pursuit of the secret war against Castro created the atmosphere in which those intrigues flourished. Meanwhile, Kennedy's commendable pressures on Hoover to shift resources away from monitoring the Communist Party (which "couldn't be more feeble and less of a threat, and besides its membership consists largely of F.B.I. agents," the Attorney General said at the time, though not to Hoover) were mostly unavailing, and, to the extent that they succeeded, produced horribly ironic results. The bureau's wiretaps on Sam Giancana, the Chicago Mob boss, yielded evidence of murder and extortion, but all of it was unusable in court because the wiretaps were illegal. Nor was that all. The Mafia wiretaps gave Hoover an unlooked-for windfall: through them, he learned of the Mob's and Giancana's involvement in the Castro assassination plots, the tangled relations among Giancana, Frank Sinatra, and President Kennedy, and, best of all from Hoover's point of view, the fact that Giancana and the President were sharing a mistress, a member of Sinatra's circle named Judith Campbell.

Less well known is the case of Ellen Rometsch, who came to Hoover's attention in the middle of 1963, in connection with a Capitol Hill scandal of the time involving Bobby Baker, the secretary of the Senate. Rometsch was twenty-seven, beautiful (like Campbell, she was dark-haired and curvy), an immigrant from East Germany, and a call girl. When, in mid-1963, Hoover unctuously advised R.F.K. of suspicions that she was a Communist spy and was sexually involved with the President, the Attorney General arranged to have her deported. She was spirited out of the country on an Air Force transport, accompanied by LaVern Duffy, a colleague of Bobby's from his Senate staff days, who, Thomas notes, "was so close to R.F.K. that he babysat for the Kennedy children." (Duffy was also a natural choice for the assignment because he had been sleeping with Rometsch.) The deportation did not end the danger, however. In October, just weeks before J.F.K.'s final trip to Dallas, the investigative reporter Clark Mollenhoff, of the Des Moines *Register*, picked up the Rometsch trail. His story, headlined U.S. EXPELS GIRL LINKED TO OFFICIALS, came out on October 26th. It named no names but was not especially cryptic. It reported that "an exotic 27-year-old German girl"—a "part-time model and party girl," a "beautiful brunette"—had been deported in August, and that her playmates had included "high executive branch officials" and "prominent New Frontiersmen." Nowadays, as Thomas notes, a story like this would provoke a cable-news feeding frenzy. Then the frenzy was confined to the White House. Thomas's examination of the phone logs shows that the switchboard lit up; the ringing phones included those of, among others, the President, the Attorney General, trusted aides like Kenneth O'Donnell and Ed Guthman, J. Edgar Hoover himself, Mollenhoff's publisher John Cowles, and LaVern Duffy. R.F.K., who was worried less about the press than about the Senate's ongoing hearings on the Bobby Baker mess, went to Hoover as a supplicant. Hoover saw to it that the Senate stayed away from Rometsch, a task simplified by the fact that her acquaintances included members of that august body. "In the end," Thomas notes, "the F.B.I. never turned up any solid evidence that she"—Ellen Rometsch—"was either spying for the communists or having sex with President Kennedy."

Nevertheless, it's easy to imagine circumstances under which unsolid evidence would have sufficed. Thomas, in his understated way, shows how close the Administration came to self-destructing in a public scandal that would have made the Lewinsky episode look like the social notes in a church newsletter. But the real scandal was, if anything, worse. Thomas's chronology demonstrates that the Rometsch revelations track exactly with R.F.K.'s decisions to approve extensive F.B.I. wiretaps on the telephones of Martin Luther King, Jr.—wiretaps that would later provide Hoover with the raw materials of his vile campaign to destroy King. The dismaying truth is that the Kennedys not only allowed but invited themselves to be blackmailed, and the nation damaged, by the criminal chief of America's secret police.

Robert Kennedy was relaxing on the patio of Hickory Hill, his home in the Virginia suburbs, when a telephone call brought him the news from Dallas. The caller was J. Edgar Hoover. Malcolm X would say a few days later (and was universally denounced for it) that the chickens had come home to roost. Robert Kennedy evidently thought so, too. That afternoon, he summoned the director of the C.I.A. and demanded to know if his people were responsible; called his closest friend among the Cuban exiles and asked—by way of accusation ("One of your guys did it")—the same question; brooded that Southern racists might be behind the murder; called his staff specialist in the activities of Jimmy Hoffa; called a Chicago labor lawyer who was his best source on the Mafia. But his efforts to find the killer or killers ended there; he was through with playing the prosecutor, and he was evidently afraid of what a thorough inquiry might

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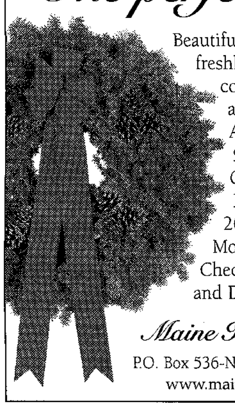

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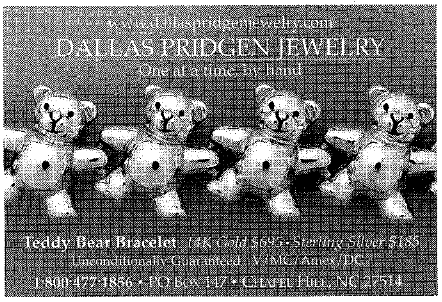

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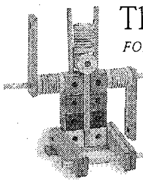

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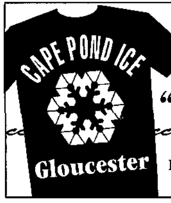

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discover. His Catholic faith offered him little solace; the notion of a beneficent, loving God seemed, for the moment, a mockery. Instead, he sought consolation in the pagan fatalisms of the Greek tragedians and the bleak courage of Camus. He lost himself for months in a dark sea of suffering, deepened, no doubt, by obscure guilts. Thomas:

> Robert Kennedy seemed devoured by grief. He literally shrank, until he appeared wasted and gaunt. His clothes no longer fit, especially his brother's old clothes—an old blue topcoat, a tuxedo, a leather bomber jacket with the presidential seal—which he insisted on wearing and which hung on his narrowing frame. To John Seigenthaler, he appeared to be in physical pain, like a man with a toothache or on the rack. Even walking seemed difficult to him, though he walked for hours, brooding and alone. He admitted to Seigenthaler that he could no longer sleep, and then seemed to regret his confession. He tried to anoint his wounds with daubs of black sarcasm. "Been to any good funerals lately?" he asked one friend. "I don't like to let too many days go by without a funeral," he told another.

The brother and the successor of the slain President disliked one another. Bobby had tried to keep Lyndon Johnson off the ticket in 1960 and had humiliated him in meetings more than once. But the mutual loathing stayed, for the most part, hidden, expressing itself openly only in the sadistic games they played over the Vice-Presidential nomination for 1964. Bobby could hardly object to the fact that L.B.J. was fulfilling Jack's nascent plans for civil-rights and anti-poverty legislation—fulfilling them with a vengeance, so to speak. Vietnam was still a cloud, not yet a storm. Johnson, running against Barry Goldwater, was the peace candidate in 1964. The Democratic Party, including the rank and file of its Kennedy wing, was still in love with L.B.J.; during that brief honeymoon, the new President's crudeness was still seen as more endearing than repellent—an expression of Bunyanesque, larger-than-life Americanness.

At the 1964 Democratic Convention, in Atlantic City, Johnson—who, baselessly, feared a revolt—made sure that Bobby's appearance, to introduce a film about his late brother, was delayed until after the President and his running mate, Hubert Humphrey, were safely nominated. In the darkened Convention hall, Bobby stood alone and unsmiling in a cone of light as, for twenty long minutes, the vast throng roared and wept. (I was in the hall that afternoon, and it was then that I became a Bobbyphile.) His words were modest and moving. Thomas writes (as does Schlesinger, by the way) that he "concluded" the speech with a verse from "Romeo and Juliet"—

> When he shall die,
> Take him and cut him out in little stars,
> And he will make the face of heaven so fine
> That all the world will be in love with night,
> And pay no worship to the garish sun—

in which "the allusion to the 'garish sun' was obvious and galling to the followers of Lyndon Johnson." That interpretation, I think, is simply wrong. The Shakespeare passage, which had been suggested to Bobby by Jacqueline Kennedy, comes not at the end but seven paragraphs before it; the speech actually concludes with some lines from Frost ("And miles to go before I sleep"). Midway between the two quotations, Kennedy says, "The same effort and the same energy and the same dedication that was given to President John F. Kennedy must be given to President Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey." Whatever their personal feelings toward each other, in 1964 Johnson and Kennedy were political and substantive allies. Ten weeks after the Convention, Kennedy rode to victory in the New York Senate race on Johnson's coattails; his slogan was not "Kennedy for Senator" but "Johnson-Humphrey-Kennedy." Bobby won by seven hundred thousand votes, but he ran a full two million behind L.B.J. in the state. "Listen, I guess I pulled you through up here," the Senator-elect deadpanned to the President on Election Night.

During the three and a half years left to him between his Senate swearing-in and the pistol shots in Los Angeles, Kennedy lived his life at a pitch of almost unbearable intensity. He seemed forever lashing his courage in a desperate race with his fears. He performed a series of feats of physical daring, some premeditated (he rafted dangerous rapids; though afraid of heights, he grimly scaled the highest unclimbed peak in North America, which Canada had renamed Mt. Kennedy), some spontaneous (he leaped from a yacht into icy Maine waters to retrieve his brother's bomber jacket; he swam through heavy seas to a Coast Guard cutter because he had received word that a daughter of his had been injured). The hero worship that he had once lavished on generals like Maxwell Taylor and Edward Lansdale now bonded him to nonviolent warriors like Cesar Chavez, the saintly leader of the farm workers' union. The former enthusiast of "counterinsurgency" (Kennedy coined the term, Michael Forrestal, a national-security staffer, told Thomas) and goad of the C.I.A. now met secretly with the leader of South Africa's anti-apartheid students, showing him how to disrupt electronic listening devices by jumping up and down on the floor.

As the war in Vietnam escalated and Kennedy's opposition to it deepened, his private race between fear and courage played out as indecision over whether to challenge Johnson for the 1968 nomination. Kennedy feared not only defeat but the destruction of his party, not only the loss of his political career and maybe his life but also the possibility that the antiwar message would be drowned out by the noise of clashing ambitions. In the months before the primaries, the antiwar organizer Allard Lowenstein, Ethel Kennedy, and Walter Lippmann begged him to run; among those who begged him not to were Kenneth O'Donnell, Arthur Schlesinger, and "the Two Teds," Kennedy and Sorensen. Bobby had everything to lose; Eugene McCarthy, who answered Lowenstein's call after Bobby agonized and declined, had everything to gain. Not until the beginning of March did Kennedy determine to take the leap. Almost offhandedly, he decided to wait until after the New Hampshire primary, on March 12th, to make his announcement. He did not wish to upstage—anyway, to be seen as upstaging—McCarthy's children's crusade.

Big mistake. The hatred and contempt that rained down on Kennedy from McCarthy's (almost all white and middle-class) supporters would be hard to credit unless one felt it oneself—as I did, from many of my friends—though it was more than matched by the love of his (mostly minority or working-class) followers. The campaign, which for Bobby lasted only twelve weeks, was a howling, deafening wind tunnel. Johnson dropped out two weeks after Kennedy jumped in. The tested tactics of Jack's old advance man Jerry Bruno—book a hall too small for the expected crowd, the better to whip up sweat and excitement—were counterproductive when deployed for Bobby: the near-hysteria of his supporters, and the candidate's own emotionalism, reminded voters of the disorder in the streets, which exploded after Martin Luther King was murdered, on April 4th. Bobby won in Indiana but was defeated in Oregon—the first time, Thomas notes, that a son of Joseph Kennedy had ever lost an election. Bobby's victory in California, on June 9th, was less than overwhelming; he won a plurality but not a majority.

"The inevitability of Kennedy's triumph—at the Democratic Convention in August and in the Presidential election in November—has long since hardened into myth," Thomas writes. That view is indeed myth, though it is also myth that historians agree with it. No one can say with certainty what would have happened—the year and the country were too volatile for that—but the likelihood is that, while Kennedy would have eventually seized the antiwar banner from McCarthy, the nomination would still have gone to Humphrey, who entered no primaries at all. If a Kennedy victory had begun to look probable, things might have got very ugly indeed. The recipient of J. Edgar Hoover's useful, poisonous memos was now Lyndon Johnson.

After Bobby was killed, many of his supporters immediately began campaigning for McCarthy, though he never deigned to ask us to. My McCarthy friends had railed against Bobby—his ruthlessness, his presumption, his opportunism. All the same, they mourned him. As some of them told me, they had assumed, somewhere in the back of their minds, that the day would come—maybe not that year, but eventually—when they, too, would be supporters of Robert Kennedy for President. His death put them in the unhappy position of someone whose estranged parent or brother has died before there could be a settling of accounts and a reconciliation.

Rose Kennedy, Thomas tells us, heard the news of her third son's death on television the next morning as she was dressing for Mass in Hyannis Port. A little later, she was seen in the driveway of her house, bouncing a ball like a small child. Inside, old Joseph Kennedy—who, since suffering a massive stroke in late 1961, had uttered not a word except "no," which he said often, angrily and repeatedly: "No, no, no, no!"—sobbed inconsolably. A funeral train brought the coffin from New York to Washington, moving slowly past huge, silent crowds all along the route.

"In the years since his brother's death, Kennedy had shown a capacity for growth," Thomas writes, "but the myth of his transformation, like most Kennedy legends, has been exaggerated." I'm not so sure. It is the biographer's business to find the connecting threads in apparent discontinuities—to see in the child the father of the man. But the change in Kennedy was not merely a matter of growth. After Dallas, no more was heard of his get-Castro and get-Hoffa obsessions. He was finished with getting people. His commitment to the cause of racial equality, tinged with resentment and defensiveness during the White House years, was something akin to total. His identification with the dispossessed had melded with, in some ways even superseded, his identification with the clan; the choked tenderness and cold anger were the same, but their objects had changed. Winning was still better than losing, but it was no longer the only thing.

Robert Kennedy, on his own, left no great legislative legacy, founded no great institution, led no great movement. His most extraordinary accomplishment—and it was extraordinary—was to embody in himself, and create in others, a kind of transcendent yearning for the possibility of redemptive change. Thomas has persuaded me that the Bobby I imagined—the beautiful existential hero—was a less complicated figure, less shadowed and tormented by darknesses of his own and his family's making, than the Bobby who lived and died. As much because of that as in spite of it, the poster stays on the wall. ♦

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SICK OF IT ALL

Alan Lightman's new novel looks at a world gone wrong.

BY BEN GREENMAN

Alan Lightman's "The Diagnosis" (Pantheon; $25) opens with an unforgettable scene of amnesia. The novel's protagonist, a mid-level executive stamped with the bland name of Bill Chalmers, is on his way to work on the Boston subway when he suddenly forgets everything. Bill cannot recall his subway stop, or the company that employs him, or the nature of his work. He cannot even remember his name. All around him, the morning rush hour continues: commuters bury their noses in newspapers, wolf down muffins, listen to music on tinny headphones. But Bill is no longer a part of this world; consumed by panic, he has a fit and ends up nearly naked on the floor, where he is found by the police and taken to the emergency room. Bill gets worse (after a mysterious visit from a pair of doctors, which leads to a bungled brain biopsy) before he gets better (he wanders away from the hospital to a local church, where he regains his memory). And then he gets worse again: as he drives home, both of his hands are "completely numb, so that the steering wheel seemed to float in midair, unattached to his body, moving this way and that by pure thought."

Extrapolate from these first few chapters, and the course of "The Diagnosis" seems clear: Bill will serve as a symbolic martyr whose plight indicts the spiritual barrenness of contemporary society. It is not accidental that the early scenes make use of a full complement of public spaces—subways, hospitals, churches—and that all those spaces are characterized by clutter and corruption. But extrapolating anything in "The Diagnosis" is risky business.

Lightman, a professor of humanities and a lecturer in physics at M.I.T., is best known for his first novel, "Einstein's Dreams," a slim fantasia that functioned like a clutch of Calvino fables. His followup, "Good Benito," was more substantial, but only slightly: it, too, was pleasantly abstract, with an undercurrent of melancholy which was mitigated by nimble, lyrical prose. With "The Diagnosis," Lightman moves beyond these trenchant miniatures, delivering a densely plotted melodrama that is almost as long as both his earlier novels combined. The transition is not entirely smooth. Lightman's third novel is his most ambitious, but it is also knotty and difficult, a book whose considerable rewards emerge slowly and stubbornly.

Alan Lightman

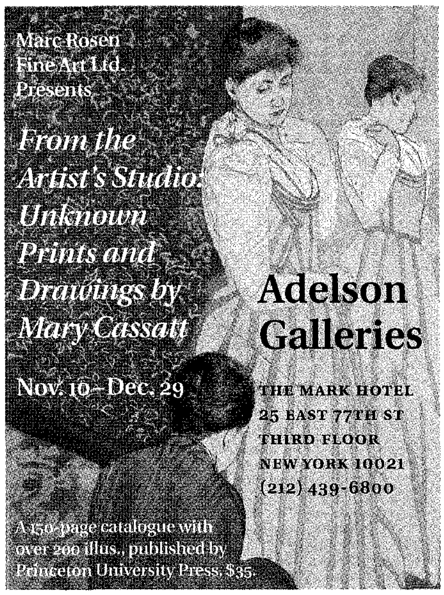
PAUL HAMLYN

After his scare on the subway, Bill does what any red-blooded American with full medical coverage would do: he makes an appointment with his doctor to find out what is wrong with him. But the doctor has no more idea than Bill does; though he is willing to order up more tests and refer his patient to other physicians, he is incapable of making a diagnosis. As Bill navigates the Sargasso of specialists and subspecialists, he begins to experience bouts of paranoia at the office. Already somewhat depressed about the meaninglessness of his work—which seems to consist of creating reports for clients who, in turn, create additional reports—he becomes convinced that the senior partners perceive him as damaged goods and will soon be cutting him loose. Things aren't any better at home; his wife, Melissa, is a vain, materialistic woman who has been carrying on an E-mail affair with a married professor.

The vague sense of dread produced by the book's first few chapters is dispelled by the chapters that follow, largely through relentless descriptions of the banalities of modern life. Those E-mail exchanges of Melissa's are an early indication; they are filled with inane discussions of hair styles and home electronics. ("Did you get your VCR fixed?" her lover asks. "You really should chuck your Panasonic and get a Toshiba. It has six heads.") In contrast to the allegorical spareness of his earlier work, Lightman's method here is almost stenographic: rather than selectively sketch the circumstances of Bill's life, he resorts to a compulsively documentary approach. He cannot mention a blood test without enumerating all twenty-six variables, and a brief episode in which Bill expresses frustration over the flood of magazines and catalogues into his home is followed by a list of more than two dozen titles. Lightman's language, too, becomes ponderous, as if weighted down by the burden of specificity: "Turning from the window, [Bill] began mentally listing his activities for the weekend, intent upon spending various periods with his son." As Bill's condition deteriorates, you might wonder whether he isn't simply being poisoned by the writing that surrounds him.

If this is a hard book to enjoy, it is also a hard one to forget. Rough, sometimes awkward, full of snags and fissures, the surface of the novel provides a great deal of traction. The most compelling scenes are often the clumsiest, including a series of chapters that leave modern-day Boston for ancient Athens, and Bill Chalmers for Anytus, the industrialist and war hero who was instrumental in bringing charges against Socrates. Presented as the curriculum of a Web-based course in which Bill's fourteen-year-old son is enrolled, these sections inspect Anytus' private life (his obstinacy has cost him his relationship with his son and his wife) and his professional existence (Anytus cannot stand the stench of the tannery he runs). Lightman has an opportunity, and perhaps an obligation, to connect Anytus to Chalmers. But that's not part of the novel's agenda. As additional story lines proliferate—having to do not just with medicine and business but with technology, law, psychiatry, religion, and even the insurance industry—these loose ends come to seem less like sloppy plotting and more like the tendrils of a powerful realism.

Throughout, Bill's condition continues to baffle the doctors, and the prospect of a diagnosis becomes as elusive as the philosopher's stone. In fact, Lightman's novel bears more than a passing resemblance to Balzac's "The Alkahest," a work about a Flemish burgher whose preoccupation with alchemy leads to the ruin of his family. Both novels are steeped in physical frailty and mental obsession, and both explore these themes through a pitiless heaping on of realistic detail. That resemblance to Balzac, wooden prose and all, ultimately suggests how "The Diagnosis" should be read, and appreciated. In the final, almost unbearably bleak stretch of plot, Bill is afflicted with paralysis, incontinence, and blindness in merciless succession. Still, as he falls away from his unrewarding job, his unsupportive wife, and his uncoöperative body, the writing regains a certain grace. At one point, Bill submits to a Positron Emission Tomography scan, and feels "the thing around him, the coils of photocells or wires or whatever they were wrapped around him. It felt in his mind like a giant clasped hand." While the doctor confers with Melissa, Bill begins to drift into a fantasy of standing with the head of his corporation, "on a rolling, swirling golf course, grass waving in the wind. An unspoken friendship lay between the two of them." Here, finally, the grindingly specific march of details dissolves into a more abstract sense of despair and psychic pain, and a vague, almost foolish, hope of repair. Although the world around Bill is "diminished to the most feeble red light," the novel, at last, burns brightly. ♦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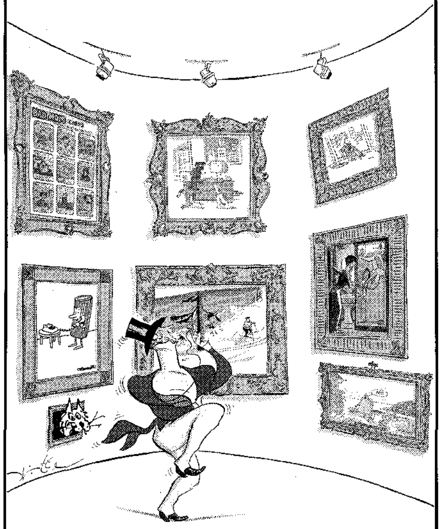

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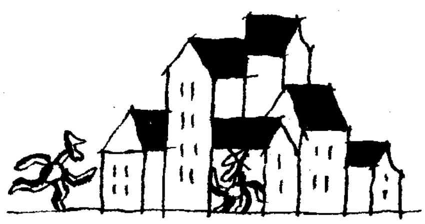
BRIEFLY NOTED

The Atlantic Sound, *by Caryl Phillips (Knopf; $25).* This inquiry into the nature of exile and what "home" means to members of the African diaspora follows Phillips on a literal and figurative journey along the routes of the transatlantic slave trade. The result is a series of loosely concatenated accounts (including his own) that bear traces of the traffic in human life. As he visits Liverpool and relates the frustrations of a nineteenth-century African merchant who travelled to England to reclaim a debt, the author recalls his sense of alienation growing up black in Britain. While his skeptical, mischievous (at times even a bit supercilious) style is charming, the truths he reveals are disheartening. Ignorance (white and black alike) of the slave trade is epidemic, and the only place some blacks feel they can live free from prejudice is, essentially, beyond society.

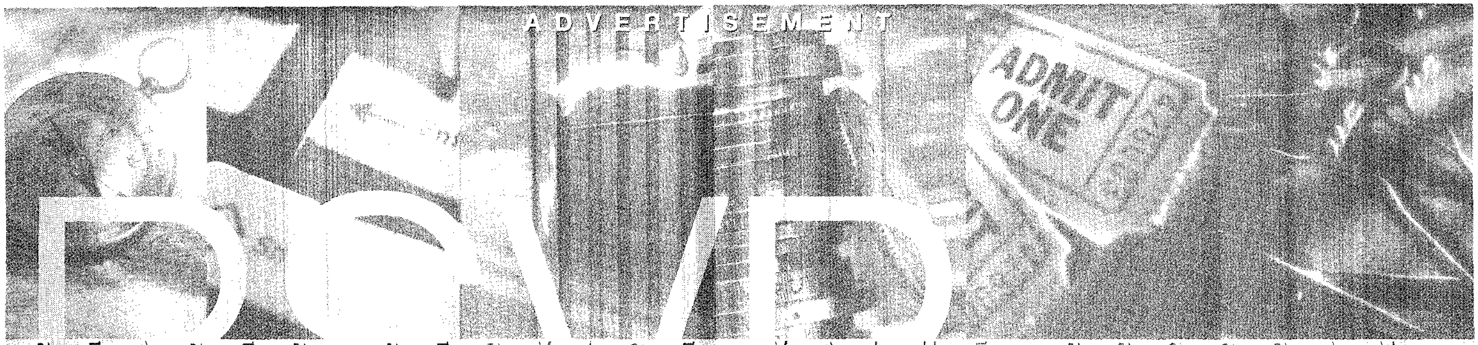
Lies: A Diary, 1986-1999, *by Ned Rorem (Counterpoint; $30).* In his fifth collection of diaries, Rorem comes full circle. Once a prolific composer and the social and (homo)sexual conquistador of Paris and New York, he now complains of having no commissions, tries to adjust to the life of an elder statesman, and records, in painful detail, the decline of his longtime partner, James Holmes. Although Rorem can still supply the witty anecdote (a dinner with Nancy Reagan, for example), this may be his most unguarded literary effort. In no other book has his quiet skill at memorializing the rounds of daily life—going to concerts, cooking for friends, noting his dog's birthday—been so welcome or so needed.

The Avengers, *by Rich Cohen (Knopf; $25).* In this thrilling yet disquieting Second World War episode, Abba Kovner, a scrawny Zionist poet full of Old Testament fire, organizes the ghetto of Vilna, Lithuania, preaching armed resistance against the Nazis. Hiding in the forest, his ragtag group of guerrilla Jews (including a remarkable pair of young women lieutenants) prove invaluable to the Red Army, derailing trains, blowing up trucks and bridges, and cutting off supply lines. After the war, Kovner, his thirst for vengeance unquenched, hatches a plan to kill millions of Germans, but events in Palestine prove more pressing, and he ultimately becomes a leader in the war for Israeli independence. Cohen is clearly in love with the idea of Jews kicking ass—he not only makes no apology for Kovner's uncompromising stance but implies that his subject was wrong to do so in later life.



Persian Mirrors, *by Elaine Sciolino (Free Press; $26).* In her twenty years of reporting on Iran, this American journalist has developed friendships with countless Iranians and an admiration for a civilization that descends from one of the great empires of the ancient world. But today Iran is in the grip of a theocracy that calls itself an Islamic republic: the clergy rules by force and has wrecked the economy; its prisons and tortures may be as cruel as the Shah's. Sciolino is hopeful, if not certain, that Iranians can work their way to the rational, respectable government they deserve, and her intelligence and style convey exactly what's at stake.

The Throne of Labdacus, *by Gjertrud Schnackenberg (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $23.)* This book-length lyric poem on the Oedipus story considers Sophocles' tragic cycle in the light of Theban artifacts, ancient theatrical performance, and the Greek language and religion. (Schnackenberg's "Supernatural Love: Poems 1976-1992," also just published, affirms her long-standing fascination with European culture.) By exploring the offstage action behind the plays, she introduces fresh perspectives, conveying events through surprising and intimate details: an oracle passes through Thebes "as small as the cresting of red / In the rim of an injured eye."



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THE ART WORLD

THE URBANE INNOCENT

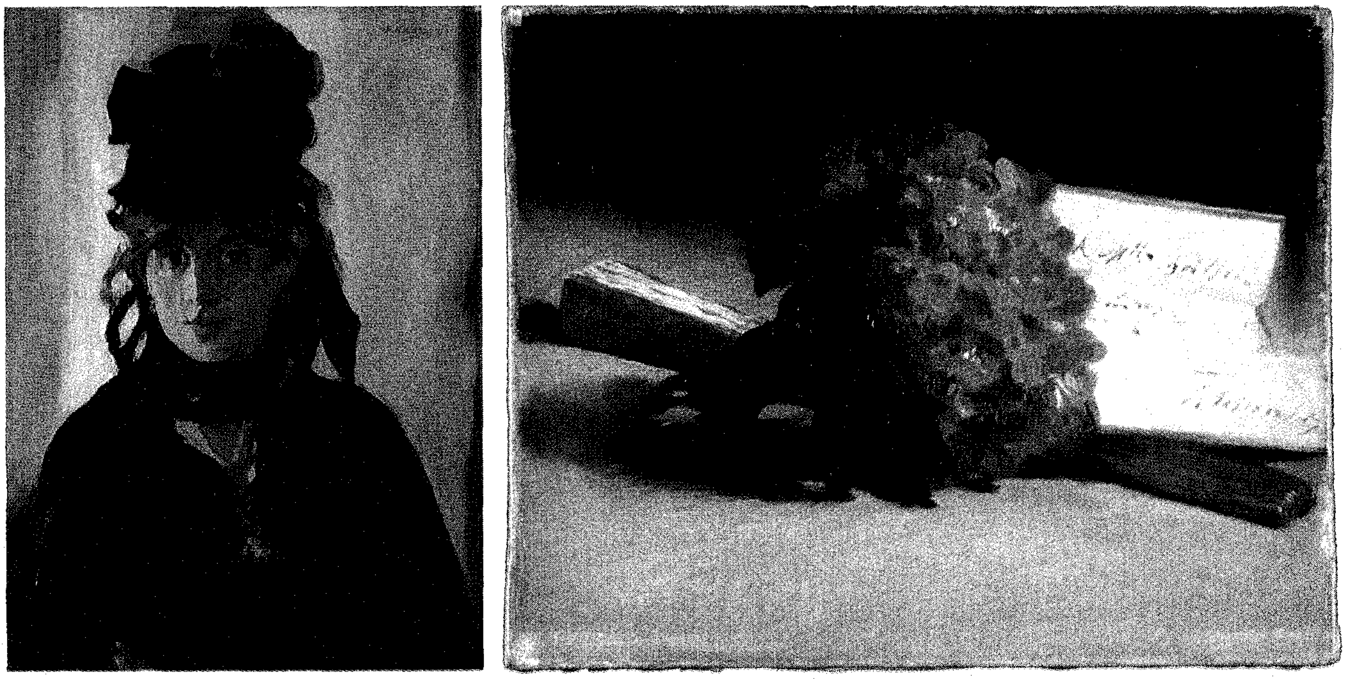
Seeing Manet through his still-lifes.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Édouard Manet was a man-about-town and a bourgeois sophisticate who died, almost certainly of syphilis, at the age of fifty-one in 1883. His work caused public scandals, which tormented him. He wanted to please. In the revolutionary formation of modern painting, he was, by general agreement, first among equals—George Washington at the easel. In art history, Manet's style is a revolving door between a classical past and an audacious future that is still with us. Anybody who advances a theory of modern art must be supplied with serviceable ideas about Manet. But when one really looks at his paintings, ideas vanish. Beauty, poignancy, and a sort of happy shock prevail. What is Manet's essential quality? I think it's innocence. His friend the poet Stéphane Mallarmé hazarded as much: Manet's eye is "the eye of generations of city-bred childhoods." The constant ardor of Manet's work is as limpid as the gaze of an interested child. I love him.

"Manet: The Still-Lifes," which is currently at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, presents the artist's underappreciated work in the tabletop genre. (After closing on January 7th, it travels to the Walters Gallery in Baltimore, where it opens on January 30th.) It is a somewhat scrappy affair, short on masterpieces. This turns out to be a virtue. A viewer is admitted to the workshop of the artist's technique and rhetoric, which are indistinguishable from his soul. Manet's still-lifes fall into two main groups. The first, from the eighteen-sixties, uses motifs of seventeenth-century Flemish, Dutch, and Spanish still-life painters, and of the eighteenth-century intimist of the genre, Chardin. These pictures are self-consciously showy, exuding decorative panache. The second group consists of works that Manet painted during the pain-racked last years of his life. Most of them memorialize bouquets that were brought to him by friends: roses, peonies, lilacs, tulips, carnations, and pansies in glass or crystal vases against dark grounds. They are desperately moving. Would they affect us so deeply if we didn't know the circumstance of their making? I think they might. Filling out the show are one-offs and tours de force, including portraits with significant still-life elements and some delightfully illustrated letters to friends which were written during the artist's final years.

I was surprised to learn that still-lifes make up a fifth of Manet's work. I was even more surprised by a dawning conviction that still-life wasn't a sideline of his art but fundamental to it. What are his celebrated figure paintings but still-lifes in which people are objects of a particular variety? It's a fact that Manet was a terrible portraitist—too respectfully well mannered and too shy, I think, to express anybody else's personality. He was also too honest, perhaps. (What mood, besides glum torpor, can a person who must hold still for hours and days convey?) Only when Manet's affection for a sitter is intense does a portrait sparkle. A great example, not in the show, is a lounging, smoking, apparently talking Mallarmé—a ravishing painting whose real subject may be the painter's bliss in the poet's company. Then there are his sui-generis portraits of the painter Berthe Morisot, with whom he was plainly in love, albeit chastely. (She married his brother.) The d'Orsay's inclusion of "Berthe Morisot with a Bouquet of Violets" (1872), a smallish half-length portrait, is justified by a pendant painting of



Manet's "Berthe Morisot with a Bouquet of Violets" and "The Bouquet of Violets," both painted in 1872: Buried erotic dynamite.

Morisot's accoutrements: the bouquet of violets, a closed fan, a folded letter. She is dressed for outdoors in a chic black coat, hat, and scarf. The flowers add a grace note at the spot where the coat gapes below her throat, exposing a tiny triangle of shadowed skin. Morisot stands in raking light against a bright gray-and-white ground. She makes dispassionate eye contact; her piquant features are both less and more than beautiful. The painting goes off like buried erotic dynamite. It raises the effects of charm to a level of agony.

Manet, the urbane, couldn't be trivial. For him, attention equalled life. He is the greatest city painter for the same reason, even when he paints, say, fish on a table in the manner of a long-gone Flemish master. Fresh seafood and old paintings are amenities of a proper metropolis, and, by enjoying both at once, Manet exalts the rangy economy of a city mind.

In all this, he was a natural. The son of an eminent jurist, Manet settled on art after a stab at a naval career. He studied for six years with the liberal academician Thomas Couture, who condemned Manet's nascent realism, stunning the young painter. It's comical how regularly Manet was blindsided by negative reactions to his work. He kept expecting his sincerity to be recognized. He probably contracted syphilis in his not especially wild youth. He married a Dutch woman older than he was; his renderings of her are dignified and sweet. He was both an upstanding bourgeois and a political leftist, devoted to Émile Zola. "He had a lithe charm which was enhanced by the elegant swagger of his walk," a friend said. "No matter how much he exaggerated his gait or affected the drawl of a Paris urchin, he was never in the least vulgar." Manet suggests a contradiction—a naïve dandy.

LEFT: RMN/ART RESOURCE; RIGHT: COURTESY PRIVATE COLLECTION

At the d'Orsay, I tested the still-life paradigm for Manet's art by visiting two of the museum's permanently displayed blockbusters—"Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe" and "Olympia." The former, as a satiric pastoral, proved the less coöperative, but still-life elements certainly add to the nonchalant aplomb of this sublime pastiche of Giorgione and Raphael. For the first time, I found myself contemplating the insouciant heap of doffed clothing in the lower left corner. The detail bespeaks common sense: when you get starkers at a picnic, you want your stuff out of the way but gathered in a handy place. Meanwhile, the invisible quotation marks around the borrowed poses of the picnickers anticipate a central novelty of modern art that may be termed still-life by other means: collage. The figures feel less depicted than imported, like animate stage props—the result of sober, purely aesthetic decisions by the artist, who invites the viewer to think along with him. The composition is as unconscious of a sense of the bizarre as an agreeable arrangement of bric-a-brac on a mantelpiece.

"Olympia" suggests a pop quiz: how many things is the model, Victorine Meurent, wearing? Time's up. Six: a high-heeled slipper (its mate has come off), a ribbon choker with a pearl attached, a pair of earrings, a bracelet with another dangling jewel, and a flower, perhaps a hibiscus, in her pulled-back hair. Every item renders her more naked, of course, as do the fully clothed black maid proferring a gorgeous bouquet, the bristling black cat, and the sumptuous topography of fringed coverlet, yielding pillows, and wrinkled sheets. Without all those objects, the painting would be a nude. With them, it's a general-alarm fire. People are driven to imagine exciting stories that interpret Victorine's detached frontal gaze. She must be looking at a gentleman caller or a client, right? But really, as with every instance of eye contact in Manet, she is looking only at the artist. Her expression is calm because she is a professional model working, in a studio, for a professional painter. She is at ease because she and Manet understand each other. The fiction of a courtesan is a deliberate reference, not an exotic fantasy. It's a joke, set off by the use of a name that suggests divinity. Who is being kidded? I think it's anyone whose workaday vocation entails seduction. A painter, for example. Olympia is Manet.

Some people regard Manet as ironic. I don't. I think he is witty and profound, often simultaneously. Consider two paintings of asparagus, both from 1880. The first one shows a bundle of pale, tender stalks on a bed of greens on a marble table. It was bought by a collector who insisted on paying a thousand francs instead of the eight hundred that Manet had asked. The second painting, of a single stalk perched on the table's edge, arrived at the collector's door with a note: "There was one missing from your bunch." This little work, the payoff of a wispy jest, happens to be one of the most magical paintings in existence. It concentrates sensuous arousal in a manner that verges on the sexual but remains in the realm of food and furniture. Its fullness of life suggests a thought: Manet ate the asparagus after he painted it. Painting and eating, art and sociability, loving and liking all flow together—even in a glance at a stray vegetable. Only Manet could have made such a picture.

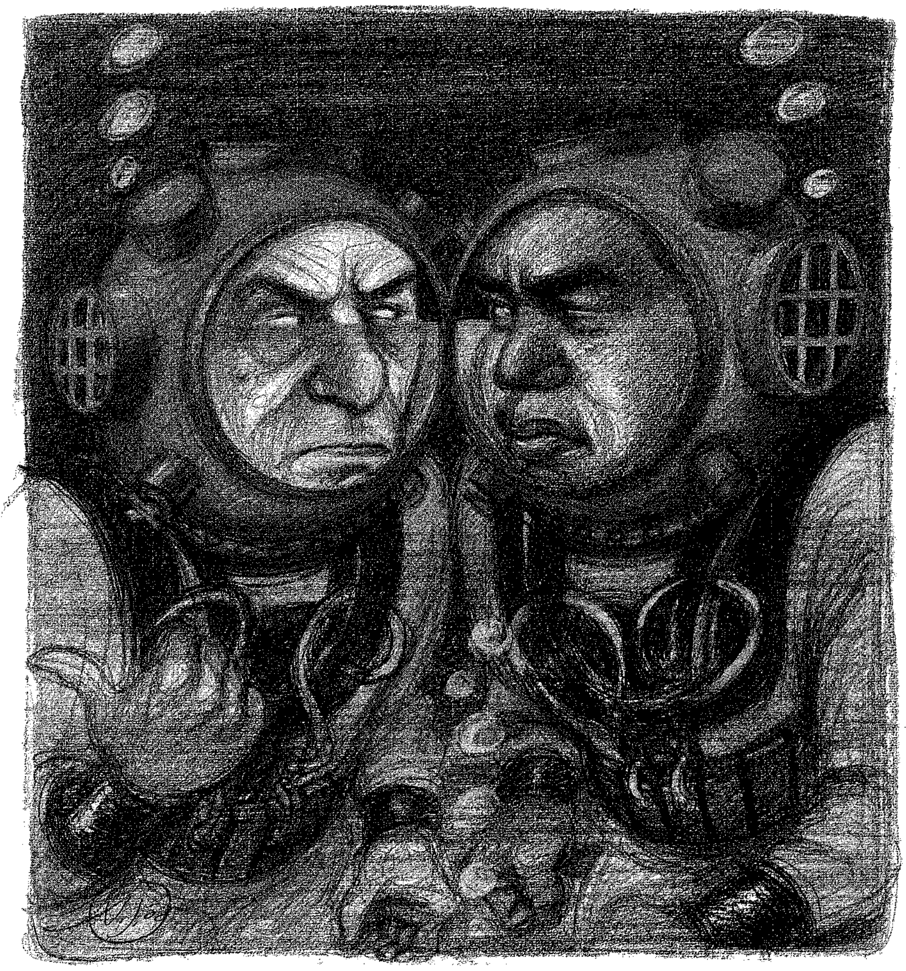
Manet's work has spent a century looking old-fashioned because its radical style isn't radical in the standard modern way that was developed by Cézanne: tones confined to mid-range, the better to eliminate depth illusion, to liberate color, and, in general, to rationalize art-making. Manet's method is to polarize tones. He was quoted as advising, "In a figure look for the highest light and the deepest shadow, the rest will come quite naturally: often it's nothing at all." I presume that today we are free of twentieth-century bias. No apology need be made for Manet's jagged chiaroscuro, which is notably lyrical in his last florals. These paintings reinstated lurching lights and darks in his work after a spell during which he studied Impressionism—an influence that lingers in speedy, summarizing notations of light. But his bouquets are substantial presences in penetrable space. "I would like to paint them all," Manet said of flowers. So he did. Every blossom feels at once unique and suffused with the memories of a million kin. When a bright-yellow petal curls down around a salmon-colored shadow, it's as if a bard of roses were singing a secret of the tribe. The glass vases abolish mystery. We observe the sustenance of cut stems, crazed by refractions through the wettest water you've ever seen. Each of Manet's paintings raises its subject into a present time frame that forgets the past and ignores the future. Each is a lesson about dying: don't. Only be alive. Manet gave his illness short shrift. Told that one of his legs was gangrenous and required amputation, he said, "Well then, if there is nothing else to do, take off the leg and let's be done with it!" When death felled him, it hit a moving target. ◆

THE CURRENT CINEMA

THEY'RE ONLY HUMAN

Thrillers with De Niro and Schwarzenegger.

BY DAVID DENBY



Cuba Gooding, Jr., as a Navy diver, with Robert De Niro in "Men of Honor."

VICTOR JUHASZ

In Hollywood, the favorite narrative trope of the moment, in good movies and bad, is that a hero or a heroine must *overcome* something. Mel Gibson overcomes the redcoats in "The Patriot" and Russell Crowe the Roman Empire in "Gladiator." In "Pay It Forward," Haley Joel Osment overcomes indifference, and in "The Contender" Joan Allen overcomes the Republicans. The triumph of the human spirit—that old whore—has never been more alive in script conferences than now. In "Men of Honor," the latest in the indomitable genre, Cuba Gooding, Jr., plays a real-life hero, Carl Brashear, who became the Navy's first black master diver some years after President Truman integrated the armed services, in 1948. Starting with that only-in-Hollywood title, the movie has the iron solemnity of a demonstration. For years, Brashear had a terrible time. Showing up at his training unit, he finds a note that says "We're gonna drown you, nigger" pinned to his bunk, and he is subjected to hazing of almost absurd viciousness. From raw trainees up to experienced Navy officers, white men are so outraged by his abilities that they convince themselves that if he succeeds they will fail. His particular *bête blanche:* the choleric Billy Sunday (Robert De Niro), a diver turned instructor who wants to stop the black man cold.

Carl Brashear's struggle came at roughly the same time as Jackie Robinson's hazardous early days in the major leagues, and we're meant to see their stories as parallel journeys through white paranoia and hatred. In the end, of course, Brashear displays so much talent, energy, and courage that he earns the respect of everyone who has been doing him dirt. As familiar as the tale is, there are stirring moments, although the screenwriter, Scott Marshall Smith, and the director, George Tillman, Jr., do their best to kill them. The filmmakers seem to be trying to define the essence of square: each scene shows the hero facing some Challenge, which he sternly Confronts and then Overcomes.

Fifty years ago, divers were encased in enormous metal suits complete with clanking shoes and screwed-on globular helmets, the whole outfit weighing two hundred pounds or more; air came to them through hoses that were easily tangled or caught on some old wreck below. Once the divers get into these awful cages, their faces barely visible behind little glass windows, the movie takes on a weird sci-fi quality, but Tillman doesn't know how to enlarge and exploit it. The underwater sequences are slow-moving and murky, and we have to take Brashear's dexterity down below largely on faith. Robert De Niro alone keeps "Men of Honor" afloat. His Billy Sunday, beached by ill health and furious about it, hating the young black man and then slowly loving him, is one of the most extreme and eccentric of all his performances, a combination of nerve, bravado, and bull. De Niro pulls his chin up under his lower lip, and the upper half of his face up under his eyes. He gives himself a double-tuck job, and he jerks his body in spasmodic fury while spitting out words in some out-of-the-swamp Southern accent that becomes progressively more indecipherable as the movie goes on. One of those gnarled, bitter, remote men who could flourish only in the armed forces, Billy Sunday is beyond good and evil, and De Niro, as a performer, is increasingly beyond good and bad—he just takes off into his own fantasia. Cuba Gooding, Jr., alas, is mainly earnest. He seemed a very inventive actor in "Jerry Maguire," and in a small role as a gay art dealer in "As Good as It Gets." He acted on the balls of his feet; his joyous spirit had an almost musical-comedy lightness. This time he's carrying the burden of his race on his shoulders, and he sobers up so much he nearly loses his identity. The need to play a perfect black hero has, at different times, felled Sidney Poitier and Denzel Washington. Many things can be overcome, but for a black leading man this is one temptation that seems almost irresistible.

Oddly enough, Arnold Schwarzenegger *should* be trying to overcome something in the new science-fiction thriller "The 6th Day"—himself. When he is accidentally cloned by a conspiratorial organization, Arnold comes home to see himself—or what looks like himself—enjoying his birthday party and embracing his wife, but he reacts with not much more than mild indignation. He's meant to be an ordinary family guy in a brave new world—the victim of a criminal cloning corporation run by a sinister young entrepreneur (Tony Goldwyn) who wears silver-gray clothes and highly fashionable tiny glasses. The corporation has to eliminate one of the Arnolds, because the existence of two would alert the authorities to its activities. In all, the svelte entrepreneur and his partners are rather hard to figure out. Unlike most sci-fi villains, they have no interest in taking over the world; they seem content merely to perpetuate themselves and their loved ones when they die. Cloning becomes their road to immortality, though some of the more violent among them grow a little weary of dying too many times in shootouts only to come back to life again as clones—the process does, apparently, take its toll on the spirit.

"The 6th Day" was written by Cormac and Marianne Wibberly, and directed by Roger Spottiswoode, and their best inspiration was to set the action just a few years ahead of the present so that the futuristic elements are no more than an eerie extension of current high-tech manias. The picture teases us with the next great toy, the near-human. Michael Rapaport plays a bachelor enjoying a virtual girlfriend who is always eager for sex and who not only appears in three dimensions but sets to work on him the moment he gets home—an obvious next step in the Internet porn world. Arnold buys a doll for his little daughter which looks and sounds like a real child. She makes petulant demands, announces her physical needs, and becomes, with her rolling eyes and bad skin, a faintly obscene presence, like Linda Blair getting ready to puke in the "The Exorcist." The idea of the movie seems to be that technology is erasing the difference between the human and the nonhuman, and no one much cares. The entrepreneur is shot, and his clone asks the indignant original for his beautiful clothes. It's an outrageous request, but it makes perfect sense. Is an ambitious clone expected to go naked into the world? At such moments, "The 6th Day" comes close to brilliance. Yet there are conventional elements that let us down—car chases and endless shootouts and helicopters racing all over the place. I wish Spottiswoode and his team had trusted the fantastic side of their idea more than they did. At the cloning headquarters, there are marvellous-looking humanoid creatures suspended like floating mannequins in water, waiting for the infusion of DNA and memory which will turn them into virtual humans. As the process begins to take hold, their faces assume a more definite form, like a Polaroid slowly coming into focus. The movie itself never quite comes into focus—it's brazen and violent but not as funny as one wants. When two such massively Arnoldian creatures face each other, there should be an uproar. Couldn't they at least squeeze each other's muscles with disbelief? ♦

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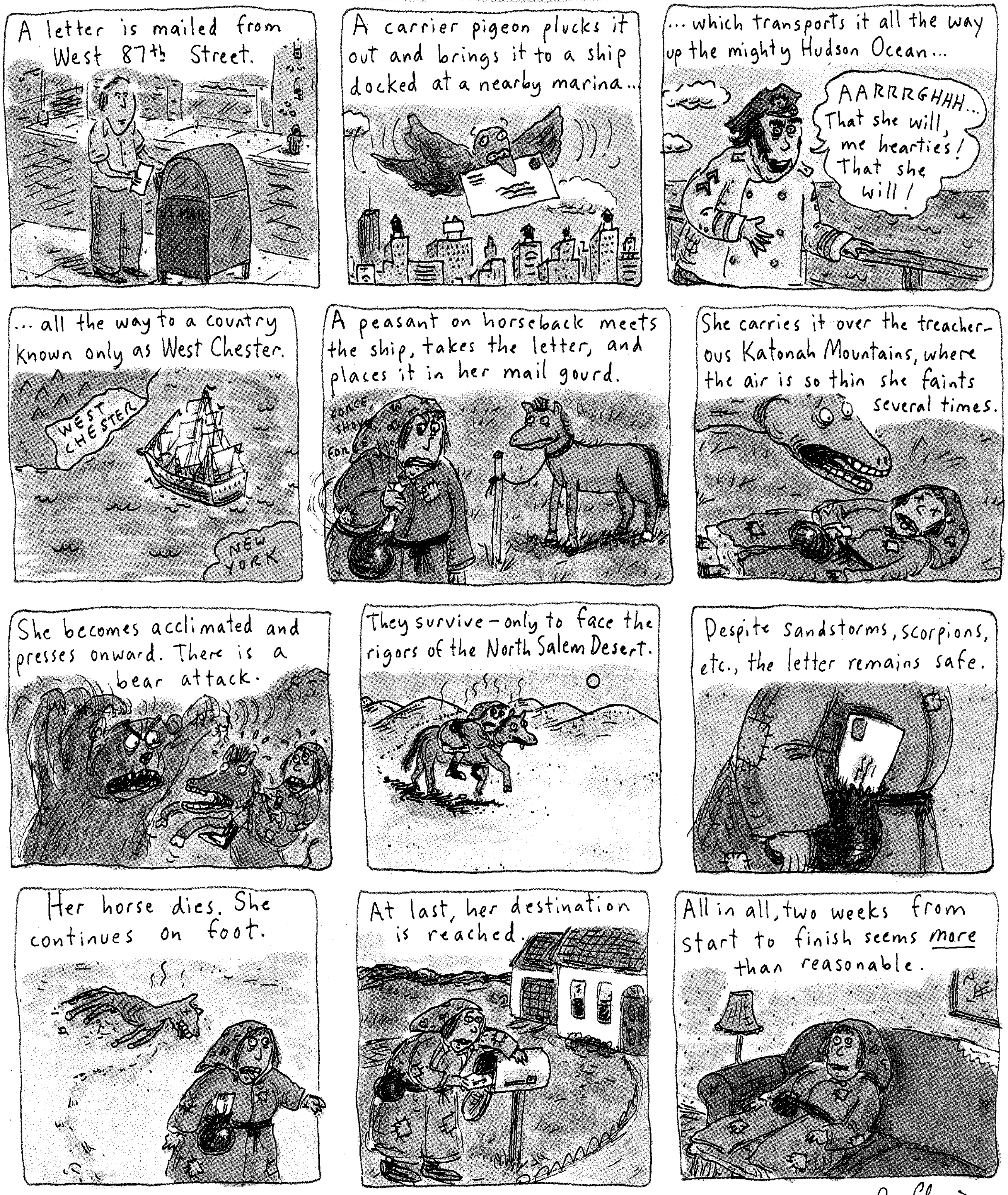
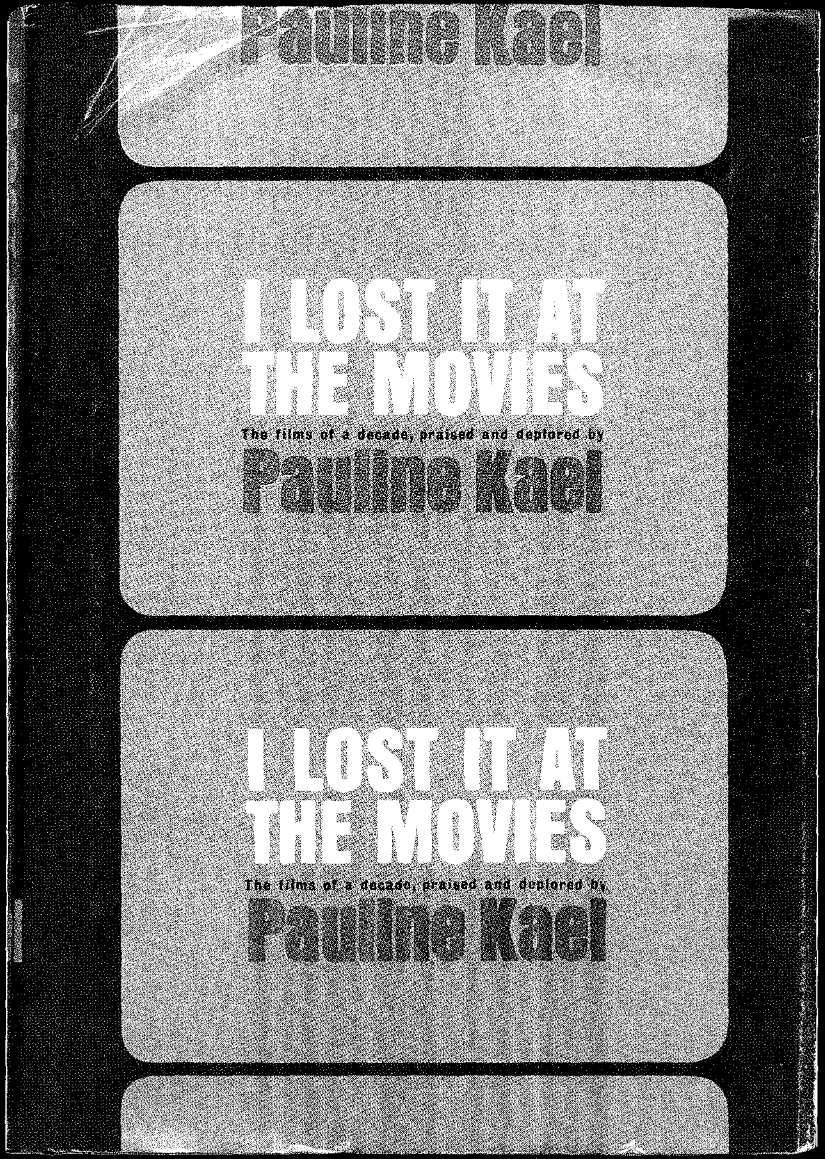
THE BACK PAGE BY ROZ CHAST

The Incredible Journey

WHY YOUR LETTER TOOK *TWO WEEKS* TO REACH CONNECTICUT


A letter is mailed from West 87th Street.
US MAIL
A carrier pigeon plucks it out and brings it to a ship docked at a nearby marina...
... which transports it all the way up the mighty Hudson Ocean...
AARRRGHHH... That she will, me hearties! That she will!
... all the way to a country known only as West Chester.
WEST CHESTER
NEW YORK
A peasant on horseback meets the ship, takes the letter, and places it in her mail gourd.
She carries it over the treacherous Katonah Mountains, where the air is so thin she faints several times.
She becomes acclimated and presses onward. There is a bear attack.
They survive—only to face the rigors of the North Salem Desert.
Despite sandstorms, scorpions, etc., the letter remains safe.
Her horse dies. She continues on foot.
At last, her destination is reached.
All in all, two weeks from start to finish seems more than reasonable.

April 13, 1978. Accidentally trashed at the dawn of VHS.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I LOST IT AT THE MOVIES
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